

K. Wiggate Jr.

212.

AN
ADHERENCE
TO THE
MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF GLASGOW
DEFENDED,

At the EXPENCE of being CUT off from the COMMUNION of
THE REFORMED PRESBYTERY.

CONTAINING,

The PRINCIPAL PAPERS, and all the DECISIONS relating to that
Affair; from its Commencement to its Termination,
WITH REMARKS.

‘Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, let the
Lord be glorified—Stand by, for I am holier than thou—They have a zeal of God,
but not according to knowledge—Father, forgive them, for they know not what
they do.’

HOLY SCRIPTURES.

To which is added,

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING,

THOUGHTS on OCCASIONAL HEARING—COMPULSORY
MEASURES in Matters of Religion,

AND

SKETCHES on TERMS of COMMUNION, tending to shew, that
all the FRIENDS of our LORD JESUS CHRIST ought to
UNITE on the BASIS of Evangelical Truth.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BELL. 1798.

Sold by M. Ogle, Wilson Street, J. Duncan Jun. R. Hutchison, Saltmarket; J.
Dymock, High-street, & Brash & Reid, Glasgow; J. Ogle and J. Guthrie,
Edinburgh; W. Coke, Leith; G. Caldwell, Paisley; W. Watson,
Greenock; J. Foreman, and W. Anderson, Stirling.



Glasgow, January 10, 1797.

AT a meeting of the persons subscribing the following Remonstrance, Declinature, &c. it was unanimously resolved,

“ That the whole of the Papers relating to the Prosecution carried on against them before the Reformed Presbytery be immediately published; and they appoint and authorise John Wingate, John Euing, and Peter Ferguson* to publish the same, “ with such remarks and illustrations as may be necessary to the perspicuity of the whole.

“ **WILLIAM AULD**, sen. President.

“ **ROBERT WILLIAMSON**, Secretary.”

The committee thus appointed to superintend the publication of these papers, beg leave to say, that the leading ideas contained in the following Remarks and Appendix, were submitted to the view, and received the approbation of their constituents.

The reason why so much time has elapsed, from our having been honoured with this appointment, to the completion of its object, arose from our constituents having agreed, that it would be proper to obtain, and publish, attested copies of all the papers given in against us to the session, together with their decisions thereon.

We had previously written to the Presbytery's clerk, craving an *attested* copy of the papers we had presented to that court, and of those which had been given in by our opposers; but received such an answer, as enabled us to discern, that our request was not to be granted, without putting ourselves to more trouble and expence than we deemed expedient to bestow.

The papers presented to the session, of which we had no copies in our possession, appeared to be absolutely requisite to the ends of this publication; but these were only procured after the third Interlocutor of a Court of Justice, ordaining them to be delivered into our hands, had passed.

That some verbal inaccuracies may have occurred in the transcribing of these papers and decisions, must be allowed, though we know of none, and we hope, that if any exist, they are not of real importance. But if any error in sentiment, inaccuracy of expression, or misapprehension concerning matters of fact, can be pointed out, we promise, before the world, openly to renounce the first, and to correct the two last.

* We are happy to have an opportunity to express our high opinion of the talents, and our esteem for the amiable and respectable virtues which adorn the character of the now Rev. Mr. Ferguson; and, from the evidences we have had of his piety, we have the fullest confidence, that, through the promised aids of divine grace, he will, if spared, act such a part in the important station in which he is now placed, as will wipe away every reproach, which either his or our adversaries may wish to throw on him.

As these papers were not fully published when he went out on the African mission, he, in the morning of that day on which he left Glasgow, allowed us to publish the following declaration:

“ I hereby declare, that having heard these papers read, I approved of the same, “ and agreed that they should be published, with such alterations as might necessarily “ occur in the perusal of the proof copy.

PETER, FERGUSON.

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The Papers marked thus *, have been transcribed *only* from the originals retained by ourselves, all the others were transcribed from attested copies.

ERRATA.

Page 45, line 1. For altered, *read* attested.

50, — 22. For respectively, read respectfully.

66, — 33. After transmitted, *read*, to the Presbytery by the Session.

74. — 4. For papers, *read* paper.

77, — 1. After situation, *read*, it was more proper.

INTRODUCTION.

UNIFORMITY and variety, are two qualities which characterise all the works of God with which we are acquainted.

While the aspect of the material world exhibits an almost endless diversity of forms, and presents to our view the most dissimilar and opposite appearances and productions, it at the same time affords the strongest indications, that amid all its varied and apparently casual and unconnected modifications, it is invariably subject-ed to the uniform, determinate, and powerful influence of general laws.

To the works of Providence the same remark is strictly applicable, whether we contemplate the vicissitudes of the seasons, the rise, progress, and declension of nations and families, or the chequered dispensations which are exercised towards the individual, while he is successively passing from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to decrepitude, helplessness, and death, we are furnished with the most convincing proof, that though there be nothing new under the sun, yet no man can tell what a day will bring forth.

Considered as beings possessed of intelligence, and susceptible of moral and religious culture, it seems to be the appointment of heaven, that both the individual and the species should advance gradually and progressively, in the use of means, to greater degrees of knowledge, virtue, and piety; and in so far as this general principle is found to operate, it is expressive of uniformity; but in so far as our progress in this course is unequal at one time, to what it hath been at another, and in proportion as some individuals and communities surpass others, in the career of improvement, we have an indication of variety.

If we turn our attention towards the work of redemption, which we must consider as the chief of the ways of God, we shall find somewhat evidently analogous to the ideas here suggested. While true believers of every age, nation, and language, are equally the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, yet in this family there are little children, young men, and fathers, who seem to be thus discriminated one from another, in consequence of their having received various degrees of those gifts and graces which are communicated by the one Spirit, " who distributeth to every one severally as he willeth." Hence they are not only distinguished from one another, but each individual may be viewed, in certain respects, as differing from himself, though, from the mo-

ment of their vital union to the Lord Jesus Christ, they stand uniformly and equally related to him as their glorious Head; yet, in the successive stages of their christian journey, their feelings, hopes, fears, and modes of thinking, are remarkably different at one time from what they have been at another—Now they speak in the language of exultation, saying, “ Our mountain stands strong, and we shall not be moved”—Now they take up the bitter complaint; “ He hides his face, and we are troubled.” Notwithstanding of which, these righteous ones do all “ hold on in the way;” and, having clean hands, “ they wax stronger and stronger”—Their “ path is as the shining light, which shineth more abundantly unto the perfect day”—“ There is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear.”

From these observations it naturally follows, that neither the individual, nor the species, are to be considered as stationary; and therefore that no degree of knowledge, virtue, or piety, which we may hitherto have attained, ought to be deemed as either the highest of which we are susceptible, or the greatest to which we should aspire—It ever continues to be our duty to “ grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”—We are “ to add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity”—“ Forgetting the things which are behind,” we are to “ press forward towards the mark, in order to gain the prize, even the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

The same remarks tend strongly to evince, that there is something adverse, in the very nature of things, to our supposing that any system, composed by fallible men, should be so perfect as to preclude the propriety or necessity of its being either examined, enlarged, diminished, or modified, especially if it comprehends a number of propositions, and embraces a multiplicity of objects. If we judge by analogy we must conclude, that though men of the most upright intentions and enlarged views, were carrying on a work of reformation, under any degree of the out-pouring of the Spirit which falls short of inspiration and infallible guidance, their progress in knowledge, in extensive views of divine truth, and in the various modes by which one scriptural doctrine or fact qualifies and explains another, must still be gradual and progressive.

It is indeed our privilege to know that the scriptures are an invariable, a perfect, and a complete rule of faith and manners. But, alas! we who are under obligations to understand, believe, receive, and obey them, are overwhelmed with darkness; and the blindness and imbecillity of our mental frame, forms a mournful contrast to the perspicuity and perfection of that sacred rule. And even those who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds, are but renewed in part; they indeed see, but “ they see darkly and as through a glass.” And, until that which is perfect is come, they can only

know in part; and therefore must not only form imperfect conceptions with relation to several of those objects which religion presents to our view, but may also imbibe and persevere, until the moment of their dissolution, in the belief of erroneous opinions on every topic, the true knowledge and firm belief of which is not necessary to salvation.

It is also to be remarked, that though all the parts of Divine Revelation are equally true, yet they neither exhibit the same degree of clearness, nor are possessed of equal importance. "That man," surely, "is little to be envied," whose judgment would permit him to believe, that the visions of Ezekiel are as easily understood as our Saviour's sermon on the mount, or whose piety would permit him to conclude, that because they are equally narrated or taught in scripture, that therefore the office of a deacon, the prohibition to eat blood, and the execution of the detestable Haman, are of as much importance as the doctrine of the atonement, the official character of the Holy Spirit, and the crucifixion of the Son of God.

The evidences of that truth, the practical knowledge of which makes wise unto salvation, is so clearly revealed, and the belief and profession thereof so conducive to the glory of God and the good of men, that no system can be deemed orthodox, or entitled to our support or approbation, which either omits, corrupts, or rejects any truth coming under this description. But it is one thing for christians to attain a full persuasion, and to enjoy uniformity of judgment respecting those truths which possess these qualities, and it is quite a different matter for them to feel an entire conviction, and enjoy unanimity of sentiment, concerning all those doctrines which relate to the worship, government, and discipline of the christian church—The nature and proper limits of that connexion which ought to subsist between her and the kingdoms of this world, &c. &c. The former degree of knowledge, and species of uniformity, real christians have enjoyed in all ages: the latter was undoubtedly the privilege of the inspired penmen, and seems to have been necessary towards their being authorised to say, to christians of all succeeding ages, that which ye have heard and learned of us, "do, and the God of peace shall be with you"—And, "be ye followers of us as dear children." Hence the New Testament church is said to be "built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." But this seems to be language suitable to those only who are possessed of their high qualifications; and their appropriate character, and dignified functions, not only required such high qualifications, but was essentially necessary to entitle them to hold such language. They were selected to exhibit an infallible rule of faith and manners for christians of all succeeding ages; and it was requisite that their endowments should correspond to the dignity and importance of their honourable employment.—They "spake as they were

moved by the Holy Ghost." But the moment that this standard was completed, these peculiar functions were superseded, and the bestowal of those peculiar gifts and graces, which were requisite to give them effect, were discontinued. Since which period the most enlightened and well-meaning individuals, and the most venerable "synods and councils may have erred." And though we are bound to treat the judgment of such with a very high degree of respect, yet their sentiments, systems and decisions cannot, in any one instance, bind the conscience any farther than each individual, as judging for himself, in the conscientious exercise of the rights of private judgment can perceive them to be agreeable to, and founded on, the word of God.

If the foregoing observations are kept steadily in view, they must also abate our surprize, at that diversity of sentiment which hath so long prevailed in the church of God. But, indeed, to whatever quarter we turn our attention, we there meet with additional evidence of the numerous impediments which unceasingly obstruct uniformity of opinion, while we perceive certain principles of great energy constantly engaged in promoting diversity of sentiment. The propriety of this remark will not be denied by those who reflect on that dissimilarity of sentiment, which is a certain consequence of the varied texture of the human constitution, both with regard to its intellectual and active powers, and on that variety of opinion, and those different shades of sentiment, which must ever arise from the different modes by which different individuals have been accustomed to arrange their acquired knowledge, and on the tinge which our sentiments never fail to receive from the company we have frequented, the books we have read, and the practices in which we have delighted: to which we may add, that perhaps no two individuals ever existed whose knowledge was composed precisely of the same ingredients with respect to number, quality, and degree. And it seems susceptible of proof, that the slightest variation in any of these respects, must be productive of a corresponding diversity in those modes of thinking by which such different persons will be distinguished. And perhaps the existence of a single idea, more or less, in one man's mind than what is in another's, may so completely modify the other parts of his stock of knowledge, as to exhibit a much greater variety in the aspect of their minds, than we are disposed to imagine.

If these sentiments are well founded, how powerfully do they plead for the exercise of moderation, charity and forbearance, towards those of our christian brethren whose opinions in religion do not exactly correspond with our own, especially if they only exhibit those shades of difference, which must be considered as the surest indication that each of us have examined and judged for ourselves; and while they reach the most severe reproof towards those mistaken zealots, who wish to promote the religion of Jesus by civil

pains and penalties, they brand with perpetual infamy the memory of those infuriated bigots of former ages, who acted on the supposition that conviction could be produced by fire and faggot.

The same observations seem to suggest, that the only rational method of attaining a comfortable degree of a judicious and permanent uniformity, is, by founding it on knowledge; and it never can be completely established on this basis, until the most ample scope is given to freedom of enquiry. Men may indeed be found, who are unanimous in giving an implicit reception to the dictates of those who are their cotemporaries, or who have gone before them; but this is not uniformity of opinion, but an agreement to divest themselves of the dignity of men, and the character of protestants. To unanimities of this description, the progress of knowledge must ever prove destructive; but ruined they must be, in order to pave the way for the establishment of that uniformity which is the result of knowledge: and it is no less our duty to demolish the former than to build up the latter; to the effecting of which, mankind must be invited to a fair and full discussion of every dubious point: light must be called in from every quarter, prejudices must be attacked, sophistry detected, and error confuted. By these means truth will be perceived to possess such intrinsic excellencies and unfading charms, as must induce her genuine lovers and enlightened admirers to forget her dow'ry in the contemplation of herself. And perhaps no one of the numerous general charges which are daily, because easily, brought against the present age, is either better founded or less attended to, than that which supposes that we are chiefly influenced by custom and habit, in preferring one religious denomination to another. We indeed have no wish to insinuate, that the present generation is more guilty in this respect than those were who have gone before us, as it seems to be presumable, that amid all our failings, knowledge is more easily attained, more generally pursued, and more extensively diffused, than it has been in any preceding age: but what we still most assuredly want, is, a suitable degree of that disposition which loves truth better than names, parties, temporary reputation, and worldly applause; and which deems nothing essential to the positive institutions of Jesus, but what is enforced with a thus saith the Lord. How many may be found who have adopted a pure system of principles, without having either examined its evidence, or discerned its excellency; but have embraced it from no higher motive than the example of parents, the force of custom, or the prejudices of education. It is surely difficult to perceive what claim such persons can have to the character of protestants. "A man," says the inimitable Milton, "may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believes only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing any other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he so holds becomes his heresy." And again, "Who knows

“ not that there be some protestants who live in as arrant an implicit faith as any lay-papist of Loretto.”

We may further remark, that in consequence of the invention of the art of printing, the most ample means are now enjoyed by almost every description of men to judge for themselves. Previous to this discovery, those prejudices which were subservient to utility and truth, (if any prejudices can be so) might perhaps be entitled to some degree of respect. But what wise man would choose to go perpetually on crutches, because he had once been lame; or where is the man who will lay aside the use of his eye-sight, and submit to be led by others, because he once was blind? Not less inconsistent and unreasonable, however, is the conduct of those who rest their belief on the authority of others, notwithstanding that they have an opportunity to examine and judge for themselves. Prior to the invention of this admirable art, the key of knowledge was possessed only by the few, while the many were doomed, by their situation, to the most profound ignorance. The reformation opened a passage through which mankind were enabled to emerge from that ignorance, superstition and Barbarism in which they had been so long immersed; and must be considered as the first and most conspicuous effect which the art of printing produced: for though we were to suppose that a Luther, a Calvin, or a Knox had previously arisen in every kingdom, yet without the aid of this art, or of some one analogous to it, all their efforts to propagate knowledge must have been feeble and unavailing. “ Whilst the munificence of the rich, “ and the industry of the learned,” says a living author of great reputation *, “ were thus employed throughout Italy in preserving “ the remains of the ancient authors, some obscure individuals, in “ a corner of Germany, had conceived, and were bringing to per- “ fection, an invention which, by means equally effectual and un- “ expected, secured to the world the result of their labours—This “ was the art of printing with moveable types: a discovery of “ which the beneficial effects have been increasing to the present “ day, and are yet advancing with accelerated progress. The co- “ incidence of this discovery with the spirit of the times in which “ it had birth, was highly fortunate: had it been made known at “ a much earlier period, it would have been disregarded or forgot- “ ten—and, had it been further postponed, it is probable that, “ notwithstanding the diligence of the learned, many works would “ have been totally lost, which are now justly regarded as the no- “ blest monuments of the human intellect (a).”

* See Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, 2 edit. vol. i. p. 42.

(a) “ Of the numerous authors” (says the masterly writer just quoted in the Text) “ who have minutely inquired into the rise of this useful art, no one has had greater opportunities of obtaining information, or has pursued his enquiries with more accuracy than Mr Heineken, who has clearly shewn, that the fabrication of cards for games of chance was first practised in Germany, and was in use before the close of the fourteenth century. Not long afterwards, the same art that had at first been subservient to

It is indeed extremely to be regretted, that in most countries the advantages which this noble art seems calculated to afford, have hitherto been but very imperfectly enjoyed: and the history of all countries seems to evince, that those who have been in the possession of civil and ecclesiastical power, have generally been inclined to give a monopoly of this privilege to those who were disposed to use it for supporting their power, extending their principles, and approving their conduct.

That the liberty of the press has frequently degenerated into licentiousness, is indeed abundantly evinced by the annals of the present, and the history of past ages; and that in this case it ought to be subjected to such a degree of restraint as is necessary to protect the individual from unmerited insult, and secure the community from external violence, is not to be disputed: but to restrain it beyond what these purposes do rigorously demand, is to apply a remedy much worse than the disease. And perhaps in most cases, a person of a benevolent, comprehensive and vigorous mind, would rather submit to such abuses as may occasionally result even from the most unbounded freedom of the press, than deprive himself, or prevent others, from the enjoyment of those advantages which it is calculated to confer. Such a person will indeed readily perceive, that some degree of inconvenience must arise, even from that freedom of the press which the principles of civil and religious liberty do require; but while he sincerely laments these inconveniences, he cannot but discern, that, on comparison, they are immensely preferable to the pernicious effects which infallibly result from every arrangement which prevents the most ample freedom of enquiry, and the most unrestrained discussion of every controverted topic. Those men are therefore to be considered as having formed the most correct notions of what constitutes our immediate and indispensable duty, who excite men of every description to profess *nothing* in religion but what is founded on *conviction*, and to reject every tenet or opinion, by whatever names it may have been sanctioned, or however long it may have been held, which, on enquiry, is found incapable to sustain the test of the most full and accurate examination: whereas the conduct of those who wish to interrupt and prevent freedom of enquiry, would seem to say, that they are disposed to substitute implicit faith for that assent which is the

the amusement, was employed to gratify the superstition of the people; and it became usual to cut upon blocks of wood the figures of saints, with inscriptions. Mr Heineken has cited an indisputable specimen of the latter so early as the year 1423. These inscriptions gave the first idea of printing with tablets of wood, which are well known to have led the way to the invention of moveable types. The first book printed with such types was a copy of the Bible, which made its appearance between the years 1450 and 1451. This discovery is certainly to be attributed to the Germans, whether it consisted in printing with blocks of wood, or with types moveable at pleasure. John Guttenburg of Mayence has the best claim to the honour of an invention which has so essentially contributed to enlarge the sphere of action of the human faculties."

genuine dictate of the understanding, and blind obedience for that acquiescence which is the true and reasonable homage of the heart. By such a mode of procedure, they not only spurn at those advantages which the progress of knowledge has a tendency to communicate, but tempt even the most candid to conclude, that they entertain a secret apprehension, that their system is neither qualified to sustain an accurate examination, nor support itself if attacked with the force of truth. " You must either destroy the liberty of the press," said Cardinal Wolsey to the clergy of his day, " or the liberty of the press will destroy you." " A forbidden writing," says Lord Bacon, " is thought to be a certain spark of truth which flies up in the face of those who seek to tread it out."

Thus much we deemed necessary to advance on this subject, under an apprehension that ignorance of, or inattention to, the principles here laid down, is the source from which those maxims have issued; the application of which to our conduct, by that church to which we belonged, terminated in our being cut off from her communion.

Besides, the principles we have been endeavouring to establish, are evidently calculated to correct that illiberal and ungenerous mode of thinking which too much prevails, and which is so very unsuitable to the nature of the New Testament dispensation; and therefore, in so far as we imbibe their spirit, and act under their genuine influence, we must exhibit sentiments of tenderness, sympathy and compassion, even towards the persons of those who entertain a variety of opinions to which we cannot subscribe; and it may be justly doubted, whether any principle can be too frequently brought into view, or too often inculcated, which has a tendency to produce such a salutary effect.

At the same time it is not to be dissembled, that a variety of facts may be produced which seem to prove, either that these principles have not hitherto been sufficiently attended to, or that they have not, in reality, that tendency which they seem to possess.

But whatever be the opinion which we are disposed to form on this subject, it will not be disputed, that the far greater part of polemical disquisitions have hitherto been so deeply tinged with an acrimonious spirit, as leaves no room to doubt that there is something in the human heart, which renders it extremely difficult to conduct a religious controversy with a dispassionate and unruffled temper of mind.

An attention to this circumstance is recommended, chiefly, by the important caveat it affords to all those who have purposed to enter those slippery paths, in which so many persons have stumbled and fallen. But there are some cases in which it should seem that we ought to be more particularly on our guard against indulging the workings of malice, envy and resentment, and the occasions

which seem to require such prompt and persevering vigilance, are such as, at first view, we would be disposed to think the most unlikely either to excite or afford room for the operation of these turbulent passions,

One would surely be apt to imagine, that the more numerous the particulars are, in which any two denominations were agreed, they would thereby be the more disposed to discuss their remaining differences with mildness, condescension and love; and that the operation of the opposite dispositions would be wholly left to characterise those whose systems and modes of thinking touched each other in the fewest points; but experience, at whose bar our most plausible theories must be tried, seems to have given an opposite decision. This is so generally known to be the case, as to have rendered it a matter of common-place remark, that the nearer the sentiments of any two professing bodies of men have been to one another, and yet have not entirely accorded, the greater has been the asperity with which they have debated those topics on which they differed.

If any one feels inclined to question the justness of this remark, we beg leave to refer him to the history of those religious disputes which have prevailed in our own country since the Revolution. But we wish to avoid all specification on a subject which we sincerely lament; and have no inclination to rake up the dying embers of a fire which we hope will soon be totally extinguished, never more to be re-kindled.

We shall therefore proceed to remark, that a circumstance of great efficacy is sometimes found to co-operate with those formerly mentioned, which, when it happens to take place, renders it nearly impossible to prevent the malevolent passions from mingling themselves with our thoughts, words, and actions.

Such a circumstance is presented to our view, when we perceive persons expelled by a religious society, because they will not acknowledge that to be sin which they conceive to be duty; or, when we behold persons voluntarily withdrawing themselves from any religious denomination, because they cannot enjoy all the ordinances which their Lord and Master hath instituted in his church, but on the condition that they assent to the truth of certain propositions which they deem to be either dubious or absolutely false.

When connexions of this nature have been thus dissolved, it has generally happened, that the denomination separated from, has been eager to stamp such conduct with the character of schism, and to brand such persons themselves as backsliders and apostates; while they, in their turn, have been disposed to characterise their former connexions as being chargeable with bigotry, will-worship, tyranny and oppression. Who sees not that in all such cases the steady but calm voice of truth is in imminent hazard of being stifled amid the struggle for victory, while the amiable dispositions which adorn the

christian character, are in danger of being overcome and destroyed by the irresistible fury of prejudice, passion, and party-spirit.

Such, however, is the critical and disagreeable situation in which it hath pleased him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, to permit the persons to be placed, who are more immediately concerned in the publication of the following papers.

By an act of the Reformed Presbytery, which met at Douglas August the 17th 1796, we had been excluded from the enjoyment of church privileges, unless we would acknowledge, that our conduct in attending the sermon delivered to the Glasgow Missionary Society in April 1796, "was sinful and offensive," and submit to be censured accordingly. As we could not acquiesce in this decision, without violating the dictates of our own consciences, which we believe to be free from all the commandments of men, we had no choice to make, but to remonstrate against a deed to which we could not submit: but as our remonstrance proved altogether unavailing, we at last found ourselves obliged, formally to decline the authority of that Presbytery.

The sentiments by which we have been influenced, together with the principal steps by which the business has been conducted to this issue, it is the object of the following sheets to state and explain; and it may tend to their being introduced with more perspicuity to premise, that at a meeting of the Reformed Session of Glasgow, &c. holden at Calton May the 30th 1796, a complaint was formally preferred against the persons whose names are adhibited to the following remonstrance, because they had attended the sermon delivered to the Glasgow Missionary Society in the preceding month. Two of our number, members of that court, appeared that day in their place, and were called on to acknowledge the impropriety of the step they had taken, and discontinue giving any open countenance to, or public approbation of, the Missionary Society in future. With this demand, the members alluded to, found themselves unable to comply; but proposed, that if the session would allow them openly to approve of, and otherwise countenance the Missionary Association itself, and consider any impropriety that might attach to the hearing of sermon on such occasions, as resulting solely from the idea of its giving offence to some of their brethren, that they, for the future, would agree to discontinue their attendance at the delivery of such sermons; but could by no means acquiesce in any idea which supposed, that to hear such sermons was sinful in itself, or formed any just ground of offence.

Several members of session seemed strongly inclined to settle the matter on these terms; but against the whole of the principles which they either expressed or implied, several other members, with the whole body of the prosecutors, seemed to entertain the most fixed aversion. The discussion therefore terminated in the judicial disapprobation of the conduct of those who had attended

the Missionary sermon ; after which the whole matter was referred to the next meeting of Presbytery.

As the connexion between one of the papers, afterwards engrossed, and this subject, may not appear quite obvious at first sight, it may be proper to remark, that, at the same meeting of session, the same persons brought forward a charge against an anonymous publication, which had issued from the press in November 1795, entitled, " An Address to the Christian People under the Inspection of the Reformed Presbytery, concerning the more frequent dispensing of the Lord's Supper, by one of themselves."

At a meeting previous to that date the session had, after a very warm discussion, found it to be unnecessary and inexpedient, to make this publication a subject of judicial enquiry ; notwithstanding of which, it was now also subjected to a deed of judicial disapprobation, and then referred to the Presbytery. Against this decision one of our number dissented, and craved that his dissent might be marked.

The determination of this meeting of session excited a considerable degree of attention among the members of the congregation ; and persons approved or censured variously, as they were prompted by their sentiments, their prejudices, or their passions. Those who wished to see an accommodation effected on liberal principles, were desirous that the subject in debate should be considered as hinging on matters of doubtful disputation ; and two petitions were drawn up in conformity to those principles, and presented to a subsequent meeting of session.

To this meeting, such of our number as were not members of session had been cited to attend ; but as it was convened at Sandhills, several persons who were thereby prevented from giving a personal attendance, communicated their sentiments by letter, while those who found it convenient, made a personal appearance : However, matters on the whole were nearly, if not entirely, left in the same predicament in which they had been placed at the fore-mentioned meeting in Calton. And as the holy ordinance of the supper was to be dispensed at Sandhills, previous to the meeting of Presbytery, such of the Missionary people as were members of session, were " recommended" not to exercise their office on that occasion ; to which recommendation the most strict compliance was given.

The only other circumstance worthy of notice, which took place prior to the meeting of Presbytery, relates to the dissent taken against the decision of session May the 30th, in so far as it disapproved of a publication, entitled *An Address, &c.* As the member who dissented from that deed, had left the meeting of session at or about eleven o'clock on that night, under a full persuasion, that when the minute was drawn fully out, his dissent would be marked ; he was therefore much surprised, when afterwards informed by the clerk himself, that in reality it was not engrossed in the session's record.

As the whole business had been referred to the Presbytery, it is perfectly obvious, that the member who dissented had a full right to insist that both the dissent itself, and the reasons on which it was founded, should be transmitted to the superior court, along with the decision to which they related. He however resolved to wait with composure, until he had it in his power to attend a meeting of session, when he expected that a little friendly conversation would not only adjust the matter to mutual satisfaction, but also, that an opportunity would be thereby afforded for him to come forward and present his reasons of dissent in person. But as circumstances prevented him from attending the meeting at Sandhills, he at last found that no other was likely to be convened prior to the meeting of Presbytery, by which means he would be deprived of whatever advantages might be supposed to arise from the regular transmission of these reasons to the superior court; he therefore, at an extrajudicial meeting of session, which was convened on a sabbath evening, requested, that a session should either be called to enter his dissent, and receive the reasons, or that the clerk should be enjoined to transmit them to the superior court, with the other papers to which they related. Both requests were refused.

We have already adverted to the terms in which the deed of Presbytery, which met at Douglas August the 17th, was conceived, and now go on to observe, that the session, on whom the intimation and execution thereof devolved, seemed to entertain the most accurate conceptions respecting its genuine nature and tendency; and, without the least hesitation, acted under the idea, that it inferred a complete expulsion from the communion of the church, so long as the parties concerned refused to submit to that censure which the superior court had thereby enjoined them to inflict: hence, such official services as devolved, by rotation, on those of our number who were members of session, were publickly performed by others, while we were all considered as unworthy to participate of the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of our Redeemer.

Such was the general aspect which this unpleasing affair exhibited, when all the subscribers of the following remonstrance (one excepted) received a verbal citation to attend a meeting of session, to be holden at Calton on Monday the 26th of September 1796.

The substance of what passed at this meeting may be concisely expressed by saying, that the session read, received, and agreed to transmit to the ensuing meeting of the superior court, those reasons of dissent to which we formerly adverted. They at the same time gave full evidence, that they entertained no very exalted idea, either of the wisdom or justice of that deed, under the authority of which they were now called to act. This was so much the case, that though they were now met with a view to intimate and enforce it, yet they even wished to waive the reading of it in our

hearing; and, previous to their doing so, actually proposed terms of accommodation, much less liable to reprehension than those were which that decision had enjoined them to prescribe.

From the disposition to lenity and moderation, which this conduct evinced, it would be highly improper to withhold our most cordial approbation. And, had such a disposition been manifested by the session, prior to their having referred the business to the Presbytery, when they and we could have acted thereon with consistency, honour and effect, it had certainly contributed powerfully, perhaps successfully, towards an accommodation. But, “the Rubicon was passed”—The Presbytery had declared a part of our conduct to be sinful and offensive, which we deemed to be innocent, if not praise-worthy; and by enjoining the session to subject us to censure, had, in effect, expelled us from the communion of the church. Now, to have compromised matters with the session, on terms hostile to those which had been dictated by the superior court, in the very face of their own deed, would have been to raise a superstructure in the air, by the dishonourable and unmanly arts of illusion and duplicity, which the first breath of Presbyterial resentment could not fail to level with the dust.

Besides, though in this instance we were disposed to think highly of the motives by which the session seemed to be actuated, yet there were several other steps of their previous conduct, which to us appeared of a much more dubious import; and by some of which we conceived ourselves to be so deeply injured, as to render it necessary for us to exert ourselves to bring their conduct under the cognizance of the court of review.

The spirit and tendency of our reply was, therefore, such as our general principles, combined with the circumstances in which we found ourselves placed, seemed naturally to suggest; and was substantially to the following effect—That we could neither acquiesce in, nor submit to the deed of Presbytery, under the authority of which they were more immediately acting; after which we gave in the written declinature, protest, and appeal, a copy of which the reader will find in its place among the following papers, and then retired.

Such are the leading and more prominent features, which characterised that misunderstanding, in which the publication of the following sheets originated, from the time it was first agitated, until the meeting of Presbytery at Calton, November the 9th: 796, the transactions of which will be more easily understood, after the papers which were then taken under consideration have been perused.

In the rapid survey which we have taken of this subject, we have been more anxious to seize and delineate its distinctive and characteristic qualities, than to narrate trite occurrences, detached facts or circumstances, the recital of which could only tend to display

the weakness and the prejudices of individuals, or the strength of our own personal antipathies.

The slightest degree of reflexion is sufficient to teach us, that those who indulge such malevolent passions as envy, malice, and revenge, are thereby taking the most effectual method to plant a thorn in their own pillow, which will infallibly wound their comfort and disturb their repose; for it seems to be of the very nature of such baneful propensities, to be more hurtful to these by whom they are cherished, than injurious to those against whom they are directed.

From this it seems to follow, that the dictates of a well regulated self-love, are no less unfriendly to these hateful dispositions, than the precepts of religion. We will not therefore be considered by our readers, as forming any high claims to uncommon disinterestedness, when we assure them, that in the course of these remarks, we have endeavoured “to put away all malice, wrath, and evil-speaking”—and to “put on bowels of mercy and long-suffering”—knowing that “the wisdom which cometh down from above is pure, gentle, and easy to be intreated.”

Possibly some who are ready to grant that all this is very well, as it at least indicates some knowledge of the dispositions which ought ever to adorn the character of all those who profess a friendship to the cause of truth, virtue, and piety, may yet be disposed to insist, that it favours strongly of presumption, for a few obscure individuals to call the attention of the public to their petty disputes, and perhaps supposed injuries.

We frankly allow that persons may be subjected to many acts of real or supposed injustice, and yet these, on the whole, may involve no principle of sufficient importance to merit the attention of the public. It has been asserted by a writer *, whose penetration and solidity of judgment few will be disposed to call in question, that the various contests which obtained among the different kingdoms which composed the Saxon heptarchy, were no more worthy of a serious narration than the conflicts of as many kites and crows.

But surely the propriety of this observation must be chiefly founded on the idea, that these animosities were only to be considered as the mere effects of those selfish and malevolent dispositions which have, more or less, tainted the character, and disfigured the history of all nations; but neither rested on, nor embraced any one of those general principles which, by their simplicity, clearness, and practical importance, are entitled to the attention and regard of every nation, and of every age.

But if in such cases the very contests of kings are unworthy of being rescued from oblivion, may we not infer, that such disputes as involve principles highly interesting to society, ought to be con-

* Milton.

sidered as possessing a claim to the attention and regard of the public, notwithstanding the real or apparent insignificance of those by whom they are supported. In such a case, the magnitude and practical importance of the principles seem to compensate for the littleness of those who entertain and wish to promote them, while the dignity of the cause at once inspires and apologises for the boldness of its votaries.

Nor does it always follow, that because the friends of any specific measure are not distinguished by their station or opulence, that therefore the measure itself must be viewed as inadequate to promote the general interests of mankind, or they themselves as unfit instruments for supporting it with efficacy: for a writer, whom no one shall ever successfully contradict, hath assured us, that the Lord some times selects "the things that are not, to bring to nought "the things that are, that no flesh may glory in his presence;" but that all flesh may know, that it is "not by might, nor by power, "but by his Spirit:" and therefore, "he that glorieth must glory "in the Lord."

Those who, after all we either have said or can say, are still determined to view the publication of these sheets as the dictate of presumption, as they possess the inclination, so they enjoy the power to punish it by neglect.

But whatever judgment we are disposed to form, either concerning these sentiments themselves, or with relation to the propriety of their application to the case before us, it must be confessed, that, in so far as they operate, they have a tendency to elevate the mind above the contracted and selfish views of those who can perceive nothing interesting in any subject, but in proportion as it contributes to gratify their resentment, increase their power, or extend their importance—The charms of truth, the excellency and dignity of those pleasures, which an increase of knowledge never fails to communicate—the interests of mankind, and universal benevolence, are expressions for which such persons have no ideas.

Entertaining the most fixed aversion against every appearance of that assumed humility, which we conceive to be of the essence of the very worst species of pride, we have no hesitation in saying, that as we are actuated by the very opposite principles, so we have been emboldened, in making this appeal to the public, by the consideration that our main object is not to vindicate, or even palliate any impropriety which may be found adhering to our own imperfect conduct, by contrasting it with what we conceive to be the practical faults and miscarriages of that body, of which the most of us have long been members, far less to gratify the dictates of personal resentment, by criminating the conduct of individuals. But our chief object is to improve the situation in which we have been placed, by announcing such sentiments, exhibiting such dispositions, and recommending such institutions, as we believe calculated to

glorify God in the highest, and promote peace and good-will among men on the earth.

We indeed have, reluctantly, been obliged to narrate facts and circumstances which, in our opinion, are far from being honourable to those by whom we suppose ourselves to have been deeply injured; but we have discovered a desire to tread softly on this feeling part of our subject, by passing over it as rapidly as possible: for, alas! such is the present state of human nature, that in all probability the injury will be deemed equal on each side. It is very likely that our former friends are now describing us as schismatics and apostates, while it is easy to perceive, in what light we must view all those sentiments which lead to such conclusions; and perhaps imagine, that we have too much cause to charge them, in our turn, with bigotry, tyranny, and oppression. And it is more than probable, that this diversity of opinion will never be adjusted to our mutual satisfaction, until it is irrevocably determined at the judgment-seat of Christ.

In contemplating the awfully interesting objects which the idea of eternity brings into view, the mind is softened and melted into emotions of the most tender and serious kind, before which the traces of transitory inquietude are obliterated and forgotten; and which cannot fail to dispose us, in some degree, to think and write as becomes those who are conscious, on the one hand, of the imperfections of our common nature, and on the other, of the solemn account we must all give of our sentiments and conduct, to him before whom " hell is open, and destruction hath no covering."

We shall terminate these introductory observations by remarking, that in giving a detail of such transactions as the narrator deems to be improper or dishonourable, he may either, satisfy himself with exposing what he conceives to be the fallacious nature of those principles on which the reprehended conduct is founded, the violation of principle which it involves, and the pernicious consequences to which it leads; or he may proceed to exhibit the private motives by which he supposes the person to have been actuated, in giving a reception to such opinions, and in embracing such a mode of conduct; and, by connecting perversity of disposition with imbecillity of understanding, or deficiency of information, and unfounded opinion with bad intentions, may represent the character of an imperfect, an erring, but, on the whole, an amiable and esteemable character, in the most odious and detestable point of view.

By this mode of procedure, a subtle and malevolent opponent proposes to gain a double advantage—he wishes to bring the bad qualities, with which he hath stamped the latent motive, as an objection against the truth or utility of the avowed principle, and then he endeavours to employ all the odium, which he hath artfully af-

sociated with such a principle, as an instrument to undermine the reputation of those by whom it hath been embraced.

We shall only say, that in the work before us, we have studiously avoided this method, under an apprehension, that it is equally unbecoming the dignity of men, and the character of christians. And perhaps no one circumstance has contributed more powerfully to enflame and perpetuate those baneful animosities which have so long alienated christians from each other, than the unhallowed eagerness with which they have so frequently referred the actions of one another to motives which they mutually disavowed, and the attributing consequences to their respective sentiments which they severally denied.

To mention the names of individuals in such narrations as that which is now before us, seems also to be liable to strong objections, and the real inconveniences of such a practice, evidently overbalance all the advantages which can be put in the opposite scale.

“ Our Lord’s biographers (says Dr. Campbell) avoid naming “ any man, without necessity, of whom they have nothing to say “ that is not to his dishonour—The names of the high-priest, and “ his coadjutor, of the Roman procurator, of the tetrarch of Galilee, and of the treacherous disciple, are all that are mentioned “ of the many who had a hand in the prosecution and death of “ Jesus. In regard to the four first, it is manifest that the suppression of the names, had the fact been related, would have made “ no difference to cotemporaries; for in offices of so great eminence, the official is equivalent to the proper name—But such a suppression would have made, to posterity, a material defect in “ the history, and greatly impaired its evidence. In regard to “ the fifth, it is sufficient to observe, that without naming the “ traitor, justice could not have been done to the eleven—whereas, of those scribes and Pharisees who bargained with Judas, “ of the men who apprehended Jesus, of the false witnesses who “ deposed against him, of those who afterwards spat upon him, “ buffeted and mocked him, of those who were loudest in crying, “ *away with him, crucify him, not this man but Barrabas*, of those “ who supplied the soldiers with the implements of their mockery, “ the crown of thorns, the reed, and the scarlet robe, of those who “ upbraided him with his inability to save himself, or of the soldier who pierced his side with a spear, no name is given by any “ of the historians.—Our contempt and hatred they direct against “ the *crimes*, not against the *persons* of men.—Aware that this “ last direction is often of the most dangerous tendency to christian charity, and, consequently, to genuine virtue, they showed “ no disposition to hold up any man to the christians of their own “ time, as the object of their fear or abhorrence, or to transmit “ his name with infamy to posterity.

“ Though this holds principally in what concerns the last great catastrophe, it appears, in some degree, in every part of the history, except in the case of Herodias, &c. the names are never mentioned, when what is related reflects disgrace on the persons.—Of the scribes and Pharisees who watched our Lord, and—assailed him with captious and ensnaring questions; of those who openly ascribed his miracles to Beelzebub, called him a madman, a demoniac, and, what they accounted worse than either, a Samaritan; of those Sadducees who, by their sophistry, vainly endeavoured to refute the doctrine of the resurrection; of those enraged Nazarenes, his fellow-citizens, who would have carried him by force to a precipice, that they might throw him down headlong, no names are mentioned. But of Simon the Pharisee, of Jairus, and Bartimeus, and Zaccheus, and Lazarus, and his sisters Mary and Martha, and some others, of whose faith, repentance, piety, &c. the most honourable testimony is given, a very different account is made. That the difference thus marked between the evil and the good, is in the true spirit of their Master, might be inferred, as from several other passages, so, in particular, from that similitude wherein the rewards and punishments of another state are so well exemplified, a name is given to the poor man who was conveyed by angels to Abraham’s bosom; the other, who was consigned to torments, is distinguished, solely, by the epithet, rich; a particularity from which we may learn an instructive lesson of modesty and caution, with regard to names, when, what truth compels us to say, is to the disadvantage of the persons*.”

Nothing is farther from our intention, than to trace a similarity between the sacred writers and ourselves, on the one hand, and between the enemies of our blessed Saviour and the respectable body from which we have been lately expelled, on the other. But we certainly do think, that the inference which the acute and judicious writer just quoted, hath drawn from the example set before us by the inspired penmen, is a very proper maxim for us to adopt. Actuated by this persuasion, we have mentioned the name of no one individual, who has either said or done any thing to our prejudice, or of whom we have nothing to relate but what, in our apprehension, would tend to his disadvantage.

* See the Dissertations prefixed to Campbell’s translation of the Four Gospels. Dissertation iii. Sect. 22.

IN order that our readers may be furnished with a suitable view of the subject now before us, it seems necessary that we should exhibit the charges brought against us by our prosecutors, as stated by them in their own words: we shall therefore give, verbatim, from the copy of these charges which has been delivered to us by the clerk of the Reformed Session of Glasgow and Sandhills, the following extracts. But, previous to our doing so, it is necessary to remark, that the first paper given in against us contained three distinct charges. The first related solely to an Address, &c. of which we have already taken some notice in the introduction; but as that complaint related chiefly to the Address *itself*, and implicated only *one* of our number, whom it indeed denounced as the author thereof; and as this allegation was never substantiated by evidence, nor brought to a legal discussion by the superior court, it seems unnecessary, if not improper, to detain ourselves by taking any further notice thereof in this place; and we beg leave to remark, once for all, that had it not been for the very intimate connexion which our protest, &c. given in to the session Sept. the 6th 1796 had to the Address, &c. we certainly had taken no notice whatever thereof in the course of these remarks; but, in consequence of that connexion, it seems absolutely necessary that we, in its proper place, should give such a view of the complaint against the Address *itself*, as is requisite to illustrate the nature, occasion, and justness of that particular ground of protest, &c.

The third of these charges related wholly to a certain irregularity, with which even our prosecutors did not allege any one of our number to have been guilty. However, even to this irregularity we will also have occasion to advert, when exhibiting another ground of our protest, given in to the session Sept. the 6th, 1796.

The second of these charges related solely to those who had attended the missionary sermon: we shall therefore give the whole of it, verbatim, together with those parts of said paper of grievances, which related, in common, to each of the charges as here enumerated.

“ Unto the rev. the Moderator, and remanent members of the
 “ Reformed Session of Sandhills and Glasgow congregation of
 “ Old Dissenters, to meet on Monday the 30th of May 1796,
 “ the representation of a corresponding society, held at Bad-
 “ hill the 27th of May 1796, by the members of the socie-
 “ ties of Sandhills, Gartloch, Badhill, and Camlachie,
 “ Humbly sheweth.”

For the reasons just mentioned we pass over the first article, and proceed to the second, which runs thus :

" The representers would also beg leave to state to the session another ground of grievance, which is, that John Wingate, John Euing, and William Waddel, elders, and Robert Williamson, * * * * * William Aulds, sen. and jun. and others, did, some time in the month of April last past, go and attend upon the ministry of such as are in a stated opposition unto the covenanted work of reformation attained to in these lands, betwixt the year 1638 and 1649, whereby they the said persons have cast behind their backs their testimony-bearing for and in behalf of said reformation, in regard that they have said a confederacy with them who have said a confederacy against Christ, his pure worship and public interest and glory in the world. The law of God is our rule, and we are bound, in point of duty, to give universal obedience to it, both in principle and practice; to love all things which are agreeable to it, and to hate all things which are opposite to it, without regard to the persons who adhere to or violate the same, whether high or low, saints or sinners; as mens' stations in the world, or their state before God, does not alter the nature of sin and duty, nor in the least free from their obligation to obey the divine law as a rule of life, Prov. xix. 27."

The representers, as they choose to design themselves, then proceed to their third ground of complaint, which, for the reason formerly mentioned, we also omit, and then conclude as follows :

" And with respect to the whole of these grievances, we pray that the session, in its wisdom, would adopt such measures, respecting said offenders, as may tend to remove these our grievances; and, in the issue, turn out to the glory of God and the good of the church: and we shall ever pray that peace may forever remain within the walls of the *true* church of Christ. Amen, &c. And we hereby promise to submit ourselves unto the session in the Lord.

" Signed in our name, and by our authority.

" Signed, John Meiklejohn, Preses.

" And we appoint this our representation to be given in to the session by James Bennet, John Meiklejohn, and George Leitch, R— R—, Clk."

We shall now submit to the consideration of our readers another paper given in against us at the same meeting of session, in the name, and, as it should seem, by the authority of certain persons residing in the vicinity of Glasgow. This paper neither specifies the time when, nor the place where it was written; but we have reason to think that it was drawn up and agreed to at Bridgetown, about the same time that the former was agreed on at Badhill. As

it relates wholly to the missionary business, we shall give it entire.

“ Unto the rev. Moderator, and other members of the session
 “ belonging to the Presbyterian Dissenters residing in and a-
 “ bout Glasgow, the complaint and petition of the underde-
 “ signed members of that church,

“ Humbly sheweth,

“ That, to our great grief we have been too truly informed, that
 “ several of our members have deserted their testimony, by hear-
 “ ing and countenancing one of the ministers of the present church
 “ of Scotland, in the exercise of ministerial functions. Such prac-
 “ tice they persist to defend themselves in; which association was
 “ held in the Chapel of Ease at Glasgow the 7th April last. This
 “ we hold to be a breach of our covenants, and inconsistent with
 “ our terms of communion and Christian fellowship, which we
 “ believe to be founded on the word of God, as in Isaiah 8th chap.
 “ 12th ver. Ezra 9th chap. 14th ver. and Philip. 3d chap. 16th ver.
 “ We therefore petition the session, to consider and proceed *judi-*
 “ *cially* in our forefaid grievances; and to enable you to proceed
 “ faithfully in this matter, we pray that the Spirit of all grace may
 “ guide and direct you into all truth.

“ P. S. Leave is also requested to mention verbally other griev-
 “ ances, in submission to those over us in the Lord. Signed by
 “ James M‘Ghie, Hugh Kilpatrick, Peter M‘Farlane, jun. and ten
 “ other persons.”

Let us now attend to the proceedings of the session, in relation to these papers, at least in so far as the missionary business is concerned.

Calton, 30th May, 1796.

The Collegiate Session met and constituted

Sederunt.

“ At this meeting, the correspondence of Badhill, Sandhills,
 “ Gartloch, and Camlachie societies, gave in a petition or paper
 “ of grievances, consisting of three general heads, and another
 “ paper from sundry persons in Glasgow, &c. who did, by their
 “ commissioners, adopt the correspondence paper.—The second
 “ particular was charging three members of session, and others,
 “ with attending Mr Balfour’s missionary sermon, and the public
 “ appearance or ministrations of *three other ministers of different*
 “ *denominations*, that day. The session agreed to receive these
 “ papers, and accordingly entered on the consideration of the dif-
 “ ferent articles; and, after long conversation with the commis-
 “ sioners, and by themselves, came at last to the following reso-
 “ lutions or agreement, respecting the different articles.

“ Respecting the second article, the session having for a consi-
 “ derable time conversed and deliberated thereon; and being in-
 “ formed by two of the members of session, that they believed and

" were persuaded, that none of the members of session or congregation, are *actual members* of said missionary society, and therefore only chargeable with hearing the sermon, and the other minister's ministrations—The session unanimously disapproved of that conduct, as being, in their view, inconsistent with the testimony professedly espoused and owned by us. The complainers not being fully satisfied with the session's decision, the session therefore, at their desire, agreed to refer the whole affair, simpliciter, to the presbytery."

It is worthy of notice, that this determination of session is partly founded on the idea, that our guilt was somewhat alleviated by our not having been *actual members* of the missionary society. It is however necessary to state, in what sense it could be said that none of us were *actual members* of that association. It is not thereby to be understood that we disapproved of the conduct of those who were *actual members* thereof, or that we ourselves had not freedom to be so; but only, that though more than one of our number had contributed that small sum towards its funds, which entitles to the full rights of membership, yet no one of them had subscribed the articles, and therefore could not be considered as *actual members*: and indeed the only reason which induced them to refrain from subscribing the articles, was to furnish themselves with an opportunity to ease the minds of such of their brethren as might be offended with their being *actual members* of that body. It was easily seen, that any small advantage which we could confer on that institution, was not to be in the least impeded by withholding our subscription from the articles; and we flattered ourselves, that the omission of that formality might contribute to remove the scruples of those well-meaning persons to whom we, in duty were bound to give no wanton or unnecessary offence.

We have it further to remark, that this minute affords the most decisive proof, that the shameful prosecutions with which we have been harassed, did not arise wholly from our having attended the sermon, but seems to have been cherished and fomented by those unhappy prejudices and prepossessions which have excited that aversion to the institution itself, which has so strongly marked the character, and stained the conduct of both the ministers and people belonging to the reformed presbytery. It is indeed true, that in the subsequent stages of the prosecution, the having attended the sermon was the topic chiefly kept in view; but, from a variety of circumstances, it was all along evident, that not only the session, but most of the members of presbytery, entertained the most fixed aversion to the principles on which this institution depended. We therefore, in framing the following remonstrance, found it requisite to mould it in such a form, and infuse into it such a spirit, as seemed calculated to expose that ungrounded and pernicious anti-

pathy which the rev. presbytery, in common with the session and our prosecutors entertained against the institution itself.

On this minute we have only further to remark, that it is chargeable with a culpable omission, in as much as it takes no notice of two of our number having openly declared before the session, that if they were allowed to countenance and support the society itself, and if the session would rest their condemnation of hearing the sermon merely on the idea of its having given offence, they in that case would withhold their attendance from such sermons in future. That these sentiments were thus delivered that day before the session, the members alluded to are ready to prove, either before the session or presbytery, or any other competent judicature. Now, why has this important circumstance been omitted? Let us hope that the deficiency is to be imputed to inadvertency: but surely it must be allowed, that the degree of credit due to minutes chargeable with such inadvertencies cannot be great. But as we, in future, will meet with still stronger evidence of such accidental or designed omissions, let us, at present, go on with the minutes as they now stand. They proceed thus:

“ Some time afterward, at an extrajudicial meeting of the members, that seeing the whole affair was to be referred to the presbytery, they thought it appeared not so candid, to have persons complained of, and their names being in the paper, and not to have an opportunity to speak for themselves; it was therefore agreed, that they should be warned to attend the general session at Sandhills, the 27th of June next.”

We shall now produce a copy of a petition or memorial, which was preferred against us at the meeting of session at Sandhills, June 27th, 1796. And as it seems to be eminently characteristic of that turn of thinking by which our prosecutors are distinguished, it, on that account, and on that account only, seems deserving of particular attention.

“ Unto the Moderator, and remanent members of the Reformed Session of the Sandhills and Glasgow congregation of Old Dissenters, to meet at Sandhills the 27th of June, 1796, the memorial of a corresponding society, met at Badhill the 27th day of said month, consisting of commissioners of the societies of Gartloch, Sandhills, Badhill, Camlachie, and Bridgetown,

“ Humbly sheweth,
“ That the correspondence being met and constituted, made choice of John Struthers as preses; after which, the result of the representation given in to the session some time ago was talked over; likewise a private conversation which some of the members of said correspondence had with John Wingate, John Euing, and Robert Williamson, respecting the *crimes* charged against them, in a paper given in to the session some time by-

" past, and with respect to some of the session's proceedings in
 " that affair, the meeting reckon themselves highly injured, viz.
 " by allowing these persons, complained upon, the liberty of of-
 " ficiating in their respective offices, and of holding communion
 " with our church, while they are not cleared of the charge laid
 " against them, which we apprehend is well founded and worthy
 " of notice: we therefore beg that you would again take the a-
 " bove-mentioned representation into your most serious consider-
 " ation, and decide thereon, so as *we*, and many other *serious*
 " *well-meaning Christians*, may not be precluded from partaking of
 " the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which is intended to be dis-
 " pensed among us very soon. We hereby take this opportunity
 " of informing the session, that we cannot *hold communion* with said
 " persons, nor their *adherents*, while holding such sentiments that
 " are incompatible with the profession they have made, and which
 " sentiments they publickly declare and avow in the face of the
 " world. With respect to the private conversation above-mention-
 " ed, which was entered into for the purpose of paving a way for
 " getting these differences adjusted, but, to our grief, turned out
 " opposite, there was three questions proposed to them, which was,
 " 1st. Whether or not does any of you three confess with being the
 " author or authors, *art or part*, in publishing a pamphlet entit-
 " led, an *Address to the People under the Inspection of the Re-*
 " *formed Presbytery*? 2^d Do you see any *evil* in said publication?
 " 3^d. Do you think your conduct justifiable with respect to the
 " Glasgow missionary association?—*Unto all three they answered*
 " *in the negative*: only with regard to attending upon the public
 " ministrations of such as was employed by said association, that
 " they would *give up with, if it was to satisfy their brethren*; at
 " the same time their doing so they would reckon *a sacrifice*. They
 " at the same time declared, that they were willing to *hold com-*
 " *munion with their brethren*, although of opposite sentiments.—
 " Such, we are of opinion, may hold communion with any church
 " bearing the name of Christian, however diametrically opposite,
 " in their public character, unto the attainments of the church of
 " God in our land in her purest times. That you may obtain light
 " and direction in your deliberations upon the above, and all o-
 " ther matters that may come before you, is our sincere desire; and
 " the memorialists shall ever pray. Signed in our name, and by
 " our authority.

" Signed, *John Struthers, Preses.*

" We hereby appoint James Bennet, Robert Reston, Hugh Kil-
 " patrick, and James M'Ghie, to give in this paper to the session,
 " and report progress.

" Signed, *R— R—, Clk.*"

Such then is an authentic specimen of those sentiments, and of
 that temper of mind which prevailed among our opposers; and

which, at least in their scope and tendency, were ultimately sanctioned by the Reformed Presbytery itself. Had we seen such a temper displayed, and such sentiments exhibited in the annals of the Inquisition, or in the records of the High Commission Court, though we still should have had grounds of lamentation and regret, we should have had little cause for wonder or surprise; but that they should exist in a protestant country, and be countenanced and enforced by the decisions of a court of Presbyterian Dissenters, at the close of the eighteenth century, is a circumstance equally calculated to awaken our pity, raise our astonishment, and excite our indignation.

But as this memorial has brought a private conversation into view, it becomes necessary that we should go a little deeper into that subject. This conversation, then, was effected in consequence of one of the most zealous partizans of the party having proposed it at a private interview to one of our number, who immediately communicated the proposal to his brethren. The object to which this proposal tended gave it a sincere welcome from all our friends, who rejoiced to think that any wishes for an accommodation were suggested by their hostile brethren; and hoped that it might conduce to terminate those unhappy disputes which had been so injurious to the peace, the comfort, and, we doubt not, to the edification of all concerned. Accordingly, the three persons specified in the memorial waited on several of the memorialists; but it soon appeared that the person who proposed the meeting, had not acted in concert with his other friends in making the proposal; and, indeed, when met, they seemed altogether unprepared to state what was the precise degree of satisfaction which they wished to receive. Upon perceiving their embarrassment, our friends observed, that it might be proper for them to retire for some time, that the memorialists might be enabled to deliberate with one another, and finally to arrange their ideas in such a manner as to give in a specific proposal. It was at the same time suggested by our friends, that it would be proper for the memorialists in doing so, to avoid touching on any idea which they previously knew would have a tendency either to prevent or to retard the object of their meeting.

When our friends had been invited to return, the three questions were proposed, nearly, if not entirely in the words which are engrossed in the memorial. The putting of the first question occasioned them a good deal of surprise. The memorialists had hitherto charged only one of our number with being the author, art or part of said address; and it seemed to be a curious mode of effecting a reconciliation, to extend the grounds of contention; besides, they could not help considering the question as illegal and inquisitorial in the highest degree. It was evident that the memorialists had, all along, and at that time were viewing the writing and publishing of said address as constituting a crime. Now, sup-

posing that the author had been present, he could not have answered such a question in a direct manner, without acknowledging an action which, however innocent and laudable in itself, would, in the present circumstances, be tantamount to an act of self-accusation: they therefore, in conformity to these ideas, answered the first question, not by denying that they were the authors of the address, as is either inadvertently or falsely stated in the memorial, but by observing that the question was equally improper in itself, and unseasonably urged at the present juncture—That the address ought to be considered merely as the opinion of an individual, together with the reasons he had to offer for holding the sentiments it contained—Those who judged the arguments sufficient to support the sentiments, would naturally receive them, and those who thought otherwise would as naturally reject them; and they did not see that either the receivers or the rejecters of *such* sentiments ought to consider each other as unfit to maintain christian intercourse and religious fellowship one with another—That both the author (whoever he was) and the other friends of the address, had uniformly conducted themselves on these principles, and had never attempted to enforce the belief or practice thereof as a term of communion; and they could not help thinking, that it was the duty of their brethren to act a similar part towards them.

With regard to the second question, we are authorised to say, that the statement given of the answer thereto by the memorialists, is perfectly accurate; but that their account of the answers given to the third question is absolutely false. And indeed the subsequent parts of the memorial seem to prove the truth of this remark; if, when our brethren were asked whether they thought that their conduct in the missionary business was justifiable, they had answered in the negative by saying *no*, they certainly on this point would have cordially agreed with their opponents; how then could it still be necessary for the latter to blame them as they do, in the following part of the memorial, for their adherence to that institution? But after all it perhaps might happen, that even this glaring untruth may have crept into the memorial from inadvertency; and it is more than probable, that the error has been occasioned by the memorialists having been much better acquainted with the humble terms *aye* and *no*, than the more pompous, though corresponding terms, positive and negative. At any rate, by having recourse to this charitable supposition, we exempt the memorialists from the odious crime of lying, though we continue to charge the memorial itself with containing a falsehood.

Though it is no less painful to ourselves, than it must be fatiguing to the reader, to be obliged to enter into such minute details on this unpleasing subject; yet we would still beg his indulgence while we remark, that the very concessions which the memorialists themselves allow our brethren to have made, and the ge-

merous principles and benevolent feelings which they then displayed, with the salutary design of softening the hearts of their hostile brethren, are here collected together, and produced against them as an evidence of delinquency. Hence their having offered to sacrifice their own inclinations, by discontinuing to attend the public sermons in future; hence their declaring their continued willingness to maintain christian communion with their prosecutors, are here industriously brought together and charged on them as a crime.

But let us now attend to the minutes of that meeting of session, to which this memorial was presented.

Sandhills, 27th of June, 1796.

The Collegiate Session met and constituted

Sederunt.

“ Several of the persons attended at this meeting in consequence of the warning, others sent letters of excuse; none of the three elders complained on appeared.

“ The commissioners from the correspondence of Badhill, Glasgow, &c. gave in a petition, desiring them to *suspend* the three elders above-mentioned, from the exercise of their office during the dependence of this affair. The session agreed, that for the present they could not comply with said request; but agree, that it be *recommended* to these three elders, viz. William Waddel, John Wingate, and John Euing, to *desist*, for this time, the exercise of their office. That the other members of the congregation who attended the missionary sermon, &c. be spoken to by the eldership; and if they continue to approve of promiscuous hearing, they cannot be admitted to communion with this church while they retain such sentiments.”

To be obliged to oppose the sentiments of those with whom we have long associated in the performance of religious duties, and in the enjoyment of church privileges, is certainly very far from being an agreeable employment; but to be necessitated to charge them with culpable negligence, deliberate partiality, or flagrant injustice, is a still more painful task: such, however, is the nature of that work in which the perusal of this minute has now called us to engage. We have it then to observe, that this minute affords complete evidence, that the Reformed Session of Glasgow and Sandhills, stands chargeable with one or other, or all of the fore-mentioned bad qualities. To substantiate this unpleasing allegation it is sufficient to remark, that at this meeting of session two petitions were presented, one of which was subscribed by twenty persons at least (all of whom were in the communion of the church), who thereby appeared at the bar of the session, supplicating, that for the reasons assigned in their petition, lenity, moderation and forbearance might be exercised towards us; but it should seem that not the smallest notice had been taken of these petitions by the ses-

sion: nay, the minutes do not afford the slightest indication that these petitions ever had an existence. Surely the unreasonableness and injustice of such a mode of procedure cannot be too severely reprehended. If there is a principle which ought to be more inflexibly adhered to than another in judicial discussion, it most certainly is the maxim which requires, that whatever is urged in favours of the accused, should be as much attended to as the accusation itself. And indeed for any court, especially for an ecclesiastical one to act otherwise, is at once to lay aside the cool, dispassionate and disinterested character of judges, and to add an insult to injustice, by committing it under the venerable forms of law, and the sacred institutions of religion.

But if any thing could more strongly excite our indignation at such conduct, it must be the consideration of its having been practised amid the most serious and solemn appearances, and under the most pious pretences, by those who assume the character of being the only faithful witnesses for the cause of God and truth, with which this country hath been favoured in these degenerate times.

But as the sentiments which these petitions contain, seem to breathe the genuine spirit of Christianity, and as they seem to form a striking contrast to the sour and rigorous dispositions exhibited in the memorial preferred against us at the same meeting of session, we shall do ourselves the pleasure to submit a copy of one of them to the view of our readers. Meanwhile, it is proper to remark, that the one of these petitions was nearly, if not altogether, the echo of the other. We cannot indeed pledge ourselves, that this copy is precisely the same, word for word, with that which was presented to the session. The propriety of this caution will not be disputed by the reader, when he is told, that we were never furnished with an attested copy by the session clerk. We have it however to add, that the annexed copy has been transcribed from the original, which is still retained in the hands of the person by whom it was composed; and we are authorised to say, that if there is any difference between the following copy and those which were presented to the session, such difference refers not to the sentiments, but to the diction.

“ To the rev. the Moderator, and remanent members of the
 “ Reformed Session of Glasgow and Sandhills, to meet at
 “ Sandhills 27th of June, 1796, the petition of the under-
 “ subscribers,
 “ Humbly sheweth,
 “ That your petitioners understand that a prosecution has been
 “ raised before you, against a number of the people under your
 “ inspection, for their countenancing and approving of the mis-
 “ sionary society of Glasgow. We, for our part, think it is a mat-
 “ ter of great difficulty to decide upon, as the number of people
 “ complained of is considerable, and that very much can be said

“ on both sides. We are therefore much of the opinion, that at present, in our church, it should be viewed as a matter of doubtful disputation, in which the strong are called to bear with the weak, and not press it much on either side. Under this impression, we have thought it our duty to petition you to make it a matter of forbearance, for the present, in our church; and conclude it in this way yourselves, without carrying it to the presbytery; and if, in the issue, carrying it to the presbytery becomes unavoidable, we crave that you would transmit this our petition along with what other papers may concern that affair.”

We have already noticed, that one of these petitions was subscribed by above twenty persons, a greater number of signatures than ever appeared at any paper exhibited against us; yet such was at this time the spirit of the session, that they neither regarded the petition itself, nor the number of those who had subscribed it; and their contempt of both was sufficiently evinced, by their neither transmitting it to the superior court, nor so much as hinting in the minutes that it had ever been presented.

We now go on to remark, that no other steps were taken in this business, prior to the meeting of presbytery, which was convened at Douglas, August the 7th, 1796. To this meeting no one of our number had been cited to attend; and as the whole affair had been referred, simpliciter, to that court, it was hard to conceive that they at once should have fulminated forth their anathemas against us without ever hearing, advising, or instructing us in private, or even citing us to attend at their own bar: however, in defiance of all these formalities, they pronounced our conduct to have been sinful and offensive—The session were enjoined to deal with us, to bring us to a sense of the sinfulness and offensiveness of our conduct, and to censure us accordingly. It is therefore to that meeting of session, by which this deed of presbytery was to be executed, that we are now to attend. The minute of session runs thus:

Calton, 26th Sept. 1796.

“ The Collegiate Session met and constituted

Sederunt.

“ This being the first meeting of session since the presbytery, the session approves of the entry of the presbytery’s minute, as above, in their minute book. The persons referred to in the presbytery’s minute having been timely warned, as verified by the officer, before calling them the session for some time conversed among themselves. Some of the members were of opinion, that, prior to the presbytery’s minute being read, those who appeared should be asked, if they would agree or submit to the decision of session the 27th of June last; and that the moderator might ask them that question as a preliminary. John Wingate and John Euing, elders, Robert Williamson and Peter Ferguson being called, appeared. These persons insisted on the presby-

“ tery’s minute being read, to which they (the session) agreed ; af-
 “ ter which John Wingate being asked, if, *in agreeableness to the*
 “ *presbytery’s deed*, he would submit himself to the session ? he an-
 “ swered, he would give no answer to that or any other question
 “ put to him, till once the deed of presbytery was cancelled—
 “ John Euing was nearly of the same mind ; and also thought the
 “ session had acted a sinful and partial part, in not sending along
 “ with the other papers to the presbytery, a petition from sundries
 “ for a forbearance, and the letters of excuse given in to the session
 “ the 27th June last. Robert Williamson refused to give any an-
 “ swer until he got extracts of all the papers sent to the presby-
 “ tery, as also the presbytery’s minute. Mr Ferguson said further,
 “ that unless the session pledged themselves to remonstrate with the
 “ presbytery to cancel their deed, he would not submit. The ses-
 “ sion agree, that for the present they will not give the extracts
 “ required by Robert Williamson.” He “ protested against the ses-
 “ sion for refusing to give him the extracts, craved as above, pre-
 “ fently ; on which he took instruments. After which he gave in
 “ a paper, containing the names of several others ; a protest and
 “ declinature of the session’s authority and appeal to the presby-
 “ tery, containing various reasons, but requiring no transmision
 “ thereof.”

With regard to this minute we have it to remark in the first place, that it evidently tends to convey the idea, that *all* those persons whose conduct had been found sinful and offensive by the presbytery, were cited to attend this meeting of session. Nothing however can be more certain, than that in so far as it is calculated to convey this idea, it tends to mislead us : for the truth is, that some of the members of the congregation, who had attended the missionary sermon, were never judicially called in question for their conduct ; while others, who had been cited before some previous meetings of session, were altogether overlooked at this time. Such indecent partiality, and such unjustifiable discrimination, often tempted us to suspect, that the session were actuated by motives which they were ashamed to avow.

There is another part of this minute concerning which we acknowledge ourselves at some loss how to proceed ; not that we are dubious with respect to the character it deserves ; but the difficulty arises from our not knowing how to qualify our resentment against the minute itself in such a manner as to avoid whatever may be expressive of hatred or contempt for the persons of those by whom it was composed.

That part of the minute which we have in our eye runs thus :

“ Before calling them” (the persons cited) “ the session for some
 “ time conversed among themselves. Some of the members were of
 “ opinion, that, prior to the presbytery’s minute being read, those
 “ who appeared should be asked if they would agree or submit to

" the decision of session the 27th of June last; and that the moderator *might* ask them that question as a *preliminary*."

The flightest degree of attention will enable us to discern, that this account of the matter is lame and ambiguous. We are told that certain members made a particular proposal; but we are left wholly at an uncertainty whether this motion was acceded to or rejected by the session; or, if agreed to, whether it was put to the persons cited; or if put, whether it was acquiesced in by them. Concerning each of these important circumstances the most profound silence is observed.

But we have a charge of a still more serious nature to bring against this minute: for a regard to truth obliges us to say, that it is not only lame and ambiguous, but states that which is directly opposite to matter of fact. It tells us that those who made the motion gave it as their opinion that the moderator *might* ask, as a *preliminary*, whether we would agree to a previous decision of that court? But the truth is, that the person who made, and the persons by whom this motion was supported, were so far from considering it as a *preliminary*, that they meant nothing less than thereby to put a *final* termination to that unpleasing business. Nay, further, it is certain that the session actually proposed an acquiescence in their former decision to us, as the only satisfaction they would require at our hands; and at the same time used the most earnest solicitation in order to induce us not to *insist* for a hearing of the presbytery's minute.

But before any thing which involves the idea of intentional falsehood is imputed to the record of a church court, it becomes us to enquire whether the *objectionable* sentence be susceptible of a reasonable and consistent explanation. We accordingly have endeavoured to discover whether there be any rational sense in which these terms can be considered as *preliminary*; but we are free to say that we can think of none.

Hall's Encyclopedia will be allowed a sufficient authority for ascertaining the usual acceptation of that word in the English language. In that work it is thus explained; " something to be examined, dispatched, or determined, before an affair can be treated of to purpose." To us it is perfectly evident, that the word *preliminary*, as thus explained, could only be used to express what happened at that meeting of session with a *view to deceive*.

The session can never hope to vindicate this mode of expression by remarking, that if these terms were not complied with, they had the design, and still enjoyed an opportunity of enforcing the deed of presbytery; for every one must see, that to have recourse to such a pitiful evasion, would be nearly as *objectionable* as the fault which it was intended to palliate: for the question is not what would or might follow on our rejecting these terms; but in what light were they viewed by the person who proposed them,

and in what sense were we given to understand them at the time they were submitted to our consideration? This is the simple, and the only true state of the matter: And we have been *warranted* to say, that the person who proposed them in the session really meant, and ardently wished that they might be final; and that the *avowed* purpose for which he supported that measure, was to prevent the deed of the superior court from being put in execution. And with regard to ourselves, we hope that we will not be accused of dissimulation when we declare, that if the remotest hint had been given by the session, that these terms were to be considered by us as a *preliminary*, we, on that very account, independent of every other consideration, would have treated them with the most pointed indignation. But so far was this from being the case, that we have uniformly considered it as one of the most disagreeable circumstances which attended this irksome business, that we could not that day meet the rev. session on their own ground. The reasons why we could not do so we have already stated in the introduction; and the reader who feels disposed to see them unfolded at some greater length, will find this attempted in the appendix*.

But by what motives were the session influenced to lay aside their former rigid maxims, and to adopt such mild and conciliating measures as those which you have been ascribing to them? and seeing that they had once embraced them, by what infatuation were they induced to have recourse to the shallow and detestable arts of illusion and falsehood, in order to conceal them?

We proceed to answer these very reasonable and pertinent questions by remarking in general, that the session had placed themselves in such circumstances as could not fail to tempt them strongly to mutilate or falsify this minute. Deeply impressed with a sense of the very delicate situation in which they then stood, we, when advertiring to the transaction to which this minute refers, in the introduction stated our sentiments concerning it in the most general terms, and passed over it in the quickest and easiest manner possible. We indeed had not at that time obtained a copy of this minute, and therefore could not certainly say in what light it would exhibit the proceedings of that meeting; though we much doubted that it would represent them either in a lame or ambiguous manner. But had this minute been only lame and defective, without containing that degree of seemingly studied deceit which it now exhibits, we certainly had taken no further notice thereof in this place. But when we found that it gave the appellation *preliminary* to those terms which had been proposed to us as final, our minds were filled with indignation at a mode of conduct so much beneath the dignity of men and the character of christians.

But let us now attend more particularly to the nature and occasion of that temptation, under the influence of which this minute

* See Appendix, No. 1.

seems to have been perverted. We have it then to observe, that there had hitherto been a few members of session who never entered with much cordiality into the views of the prevailing party.—There is ground to believe that this respectable minority had imbibed an idea, that whatever violence might be exhibited by our prosecutors, would at any rate meet with a becoming check from the superior court, to whom the whole matter had, at an early period, been referred. Actuated as it should seem by this expectation, they had hitherto made but little *active* opposition to the prosecution; but the presbytery had lately dashed their hopes to pieces by that wanton display of ecclesiastical severity which characterises the deed they were now called to enforce: they therefore plainly saw that unless they exerted themselves with a degree of vigour calculated to do away the effects of their former supineness, they must consider themselves as having in some degree participated in measures which their souls abhorred.

Under the influence of such considerations they exerted themselves at this meeting of session with such vigour, as to prevail on the session to waive the reading of the presbytery's minute in our hearing, and to hold out the decisions of a former meeting of session as the grounds on which they were disposed to bring the matter to a final issue.

Now, it is easy to perceive, that the session could only hold out these terms of accommodation in the expectation that if they were acquiesced in, then the presbytery would wink at the contempt with which both they and we had treated their deed; or that the whole matter would have been gotten hushed over in silence, without any one knowing with certainty on what principles it had been terminated: and had we been disposed to enter fully into the views of the session, it is possible that all the other parts of this strange scene might have been performed with great effect; and the world should have been furnished with an instance that the theatre is not the only place where farces are acted; but when we positively refused to acquiesce in these terms, the session could not but perceive that they had placed themselves in the most awkward situation imaginable. To have then acted a manly and consistent part, they undoubtedly ought to have joined with us in remonstrating against the injustice and impolicy of that deed which they now had virtually condemned: or if they had been hastily led into this measure, they ought to have candidly acknowledged to the world, to the presbytery, and to us, that in substituting their own terms, for the deed of the superior court, they had done wrong, but were now brought to a conviction of their guilt, and were resolved to atone as much as possible for their generous error, by a still more frank and generous repentance.. But the minute under consideration is a striking proof that they wanted that magnanimity of character, which was requisite to enable them to embrace

either the one or the other of these measures : they therefore, with all the weakness of little minds, endeavour by quibble, ambiguity and apparently studied deceit, to cover that folly which they had neither the virtue to avoid, nor the candour to acknowledge.

We may take the liberty to remark, that if it were necessary to support the foregoing statement by collateral evidence, a strong proof of this kind is furnished by the minute itself. It tells us that " these persons (we the supposed delinquents) insisted for the presbytery's minute being read " Now, seeing that the session were met for the express purpose of executing that deed, why were we obliged, nay, how could it happen that we had any occasion for insisting that it might be read ? Surely nothing can be more strange, in the ordinary course of judicial procedure, but nothing more natural, when the facts which we have stated are taken into consideration. If further evidence of this kind were requisite, we could also mention, that several of those members who made or supported the motion for waving the reading of the presbytery's deed, &c. have, since that period, appeared at the bar of the presbytery, complaining of that decision by which we were expelled from their communion. Now, is it consonant to the nature of things to suppose that those men, who from that meeting of session down to the present day have been, both by word and deed, opposing the presbytery's decision, should yet have proposed other terms of accommodation only as a *preliminary*. We have gone into these remarks chiefly with a design to shew, that the preceding statement can be supported by every species of evidence of which the subject is susceptible.

With regard to this minute we have it only further to remark, that the answers which it states as having been made to the interrogatories of that court, were really made by us at some time or other during our appearance before them at that sederunt. It is however to be remarked, that they stand here altogether or in a great measure detached from that train of discussion by which they had been suggested, and on a connexion with which their suitability or unsuitability, their propriety or impropriety wholly depends. The justness of this observation will be readily admitted, when it is known, that no one of these answers were returned to *that question*, which the minute states as having been the interrogatory to which they were the replies. According to the minute, the following is the question to which all of them are answers— Will you, " *in agreeableness to the presbytery's deed, submit* " yourselves " to the session (b) ?" Now, we are free to declare, that *not one* of these replies were made to *this* question, nor to any one in the least analogous thereto ; and indeed, upon the supposition that

(b) In order to attain as much conciseness as possible, we have given the interrogation a plural form ; but the reader, by consulting the minute itself, will easily perceive that its true import is fully and faithfully stated.

Some of these answers had been made to such a query, they certainly would evidence nothing, but that the person using them was talking downright nonsense. For example, if Mr Ferguson had answered the question by saying, "that unless the session pledged "themselves to remonstrate with the presbytery to cancel their "deed he would not submit;" what would such an answer amount to, but to this? "if you use your endeavour to get the presbytery's "deed cancelled, I will then give obedience to that deed; if you "once pledge yourselves to tell the presbytery that they had done "wrong, in finding my conduct to have been sinful and offensive; "I then, in compliance with their unlawful deed, will acknowledge the sinfulness and offensiveness of my conduct." That such contradictory and absurd language might have been used is possible, though the presumption certainly lies on the other side. But it is unnecessary to detain ourselves by examining either the possibility of its having been used on the one hand, or the improbability thereof on the other, when we who were present can declare, that no one of the answers mentioned in the minute was made to the question as there stated. The truth is, that the whole of these replies were suggested by the proposal which was made to us to submit to a previous deed of session, as a substitute for the decision of the superior court; and to this proposal, and to it only, do all these answers refer: and in this light Mr Ferguson's answer appears to have been manly and consistent; but in any other light, nothing more contradictory or absurd can be easily imagined. Upon what principles the session have acted, in perverting these minutes to such a degree, it surely becomes them to explain: for our own part, we must suppress the indignant emotions which the contemplation of this part of their conduct has produced in our breasts; for, were we to pour them out on paper, we would be obliged to use a mode of expression, which a remembrance of our former intimacy with the persons concerned will not permit us to indulge. But we apprehend that our readers are nearly as desirous of getting rid of this minute as we are anxious to dismiss it: we shall therefore now proceed to give a view of the declinature, protest, and appeal, by the presenting of which we terminated our business at this meeting of session.

Glasgow, Sept. 26, 1795.

"Whereas partiality in judgment is considered by the law of God *, and also by the laws of every well regulated society, as an evil of great magnitude; so it becomes the indispensable duty of those who either have, or are likely to sustain any injury, whether in their reputation, their religious and civil privileges, or their property, in consequence of this evil quality's having tainted the decision of any church court to which they have been amenable, to decline the authority of such court, until they obtain a redress

* See Mal. ii. 9. Tim. v. 24. Jam. iii. 17. Deut. xxv. 14. Prov. xx. 10, 23.

of whatever injury they have already suffered, as the effect of any such palpable omission as must be supposed to arise from, and is evidential of such indecent partiality, and until satisfying evidence is obtained, that such court has put away such partiality of disposition; to the evidencing of which the most full and ample reparation, of whatever injuries the persons complaining have already sustained, or are likely to sustain, must be considered as an essential prerequisite.

“ And whereas, in the judgment of the subscribers, the Reformed Session of Glasgow and Sandhills have been, and still are chargeable with partiality in judgment, they therefore deem themselves obliged, for the following reasons, by one or other, or all of which each of them are injured, to decline their authority, and appeal to the Reformed Presbytery as the proper court of review.

“ 1. Because the session have recently given a very indecent evidence of their partiality, by finding those persons admissible to participate of the holy ordinance of the Lord’s supper, who had been most forward in declaiming against the subscribers, on account of their having attended upon the sermon delivered to the Glasgow missionary society in April last; though, in waiting thereon, they only discharged what they conceived to be their incumbent duty; and notwithstanding that the presbytery had found said persons unworthy of said privilege, because they had deserted the ministry of the Lord’s servant, the junior pastor of the congregation; yet, without their having given any satisfaction for this their offence, the session judged them eligible to be served with tokens of admission at the late celebration of the Lord’s supper at Paisley (c).

“ 2. Because at a meeting of session in May last, that court entered into their minute, that they did, and hereby do disapprove of the general tendency of a late publication, entitled, *An Address, &c.* although they had *never read a single sentence thereof in a judicial capacity*, from which decision one of our number, a member of session, disented, and insisted that his dissent should be marked; notwithstanding of which it afterwards appeared, by the record, that it had not been entered therein: and when he again requested that the court would either allow their clerk to transmit his reasons of dissent to the superior court, without their being previously read to the session, or that a meeting of session should be convened, in order that he might have an opportunity to present them. Neither part of this very reasonable request was granted; by which partial-like conduct he has been prevented from

(c) The reader will please to recollect that we formerly hinted, that the first paper given in against us contained three distinct charges: and that one of them had no relation to any one of our number. It was the irregularity alluded to in the 2d ground of declinature which we then had in our eye; and concerning it we have only further to remark, that the moderation and forbearance which were ultimately exercised towards those persons by the presbytery, formed a striking contrast to their rigour and severity towards us.

stating the grounds of his dissent to the rev. presbytery, at the only time when he could be supposed to have done it with effect, namely, when the decision to which it related was referred to their consideration, which decision seems to have received their approbation, which it probably would not have done, had either the questionable shape in which it appeared before them been known, or had those reasons been transmitted with it, as we presume they contain ideas of material importance in that business; and therefore until this injury is repaired by these reasons being transmitted unto the superior court, we view our christian and social privileges as having been wrested from us in the person of our brother; and until they are restored we cannot but decline the authority of that court by whom we have in his person been thus injured *.

“ 3. And above all, because the session have discovered their partiality with regard to those who attended the sermon delivered to the missionary society of Glasgow in April last, in a manner which is not more palpable in itself than injurious to the persons concerned, by transmitting such papers as were intended to hurt their reputation, and otherwise deprive them of their religious and civil privileges to the presbytery, but detained in their own hands not only letters from several of the persons complained of to the session, explanatory of their sentiments with relation to that business, but also such papers as were pleading for moderation and forbearance, notwithstanding the subscribers of at least one of them had expressed it as their request, that their petition should be transmitted to the presbytery if the business to which it related should happen to be referred to that court. In consequence of which grievous omission the superior court had only an opportunity to contemplate the object before them in a mutilated and very imperfect form, to the material injury of the under subscribers, as appears from their not only being deemed unworthy of church privileges, but their having been also denied a right to manage that part of their property which they have in the funds of this congregation, and that as a consequence of that very deed of presbytery which was founded upon such an imperfect view of the subject as above represented.

“ For these, and other reasons to be given in, in due time, we do decline your authority, ay and until the superior court judge in the merits of this our declinature and protest; and we therefore do protest and appeal to the presbytery, to meet at Calton in November next to come; upon all which we take instruments and crave extracts.”

*William Waddell,
Peter Ferguson,
John Wingate, jun.
William Auld,*

*John Euing,
William Rae,
Robert Williamson.*

* See Appendix, No. 2d.

The following additional reasons of protest, &c. were presented to the session which met at Calton, October 3d, 1796.

Additional reasons of the protest and declinature, &c. given in to the Reformed Session of Glasgow and Sandhills, by the subscribers, September 26.

“ Because when the subscribers requested the session to give for their consideration and direction extracts of the charges laid against them by their prosecutors, and of the minutes of session which have proceeded thereon, together with the minute of presbytery relative to that business, the session refused to give any extracts at the time, nor would they promise to give them at any future reasonable time, to the great prejudice of the subscribers, depriving them of the means, so far as in the session’s power, of defending themselves against the insidious attacks made upon their character and privileges, religious and civil; as also of an opportunity of their deliberately and maturely considering of, or profiting by the decisions of the judicatories of that church to which they profess subjection in the Lord.

“ Lastly, Because the clerk would not, nor did the session enjoin him to mark our protest in our own words and meaning, but only as he pleased, with the intention, as we suppose, of misrepresenting us to the presbytery.”

The minute of the session, which met October 3d, runs thus:

“ A letter from Robert Williamson, enclosing a paper containing additional reasons of protest, declinature and appeal (was delivered to the session), given into the session the 26th ult. At the present the session only considered the last of those reasons (deferring the rest till afterwards), viz. because the clerk would not, nor did the session enjoin him to mark our protest in our own words and meaning, but only as he pleased, with the intention, as we suppose, of misrepresenting us to the presbytery, signed by Robert Williamson, John Wingate, jun. Peter Ferguson and John Euing. The minute being twice read over and considered, the session unanimously agree, That so far as they can recollect there is no misrepresentation nor misconstruing the meaning of any of their words, but *mostly* of their own words therein.”

This minute is undoubtedly somewhat curious, but the task of entering so minutely into these minutes as we already have been obliged to do is such an intolerable drudgery that we are glad to escape from it at all events; we therefore go on to the next minute, which runs thus:

Calton, the 24th, 1796.

“ The session having taken into their consideration the charge of partiality, in not sending the papers referred to above to the presbytery, although they did not apprehend that they materially

“ affected the cause; the session now unanimously agree, that they
 “ now be presented to the presbytery, to meet in Calton 9th of No-
 “ vember next.”

The only other minute of session which relates to this business is as follows:

Calton, 31st October, 1796.

“ The session agree, that the minutes of session, respecting the
 “ whole of this process since last presbytery, be read from the mi-
 “ nute book, if the clerk has not time to transcribe them.

“ A true copy of the minutes, so far as regards the petitioners,
 “ all undesigned errors and omissions excepted.

“ *James Carmichael, S. S. Clerk.*”

The reader will please to remember, that the above attestation of the clerk refers to all the foregoing extracts from the session's minute book.

Such then are the charges which were brought against us by our prosecutors, and such is the light in which the session wished their own conduct in this business to be viewed by posterity. Had their account of the matter been only lame and imperfect, it ought to have been treated with tenderness and pity, as it would have found an ample apology in the delicacy of the situation in which they, at least in one instance, were placed, and in the well known frailties of human nature; but though these frailties, &c. account for the existence, they by no means excuse the exercise of partiality in judgment, tyranny in discipline, or the willful misrepresentation of matter of fact in a judicial record; nay, it may be affirmed, that the same principles which call on us to conceal, or bear with the former, oblige us to detect and expose the latter.

Nothing but a conviction that these observations are well founded in themselves, and strictly applicable to this business, would have induced us to enter so minutely into the examination and reprehension of these minutes, as nothing can be more disgusting to a virtuous, or disagreeable to a generous mind, than that peevish and sullen disposition which prompts those who are under its influence to be perpetually proclaiming the weaknesses, the infirmities and the criminalities of others, and who seem to delight in nothing but in probing the sores and wounds of their neighbours' reputation.

We at the same time are fully sensible that mankind are, generally speaking, the mere creatures of circumstances, and have not only their feelings, but their sentiments, conduct and character, in a great measure, moulded by the peculiarities of their situation. We therefore dare not venture to say, that the intimate relation in which we stood to these prosecutions and decisions, has not in any degree tinged our feelings or modified our opinions: the presumption rather is, that the peculiarities of our situation may have produced emotions and sentiments in our minds with which the greater part of on-lookers may be disposed to take but little concern; mean

time we are fully convinced, that in all appeals to the public, it is necessary that no complaint be uttered, or disapprobation expressed in a higher tone, than what a disinterested and impartial spectator may be able to find a sufficient ground for, in those words or deeds by which it has been excited; but if these principles require that we should moderate the expressions of our resentment on the one hand, they surely oblige us on the other to avoid that tame and servile meanness which would induce us passively to endure whatever injuries the pride, the obstinacy, the prejudices, or the erroneous principles of others, may prompt them to inflict.

We at the same time would hope, that though this unpleasing subject has contributed nothing to our entertainment, yet it may conduce somewhat to our information and improvement, as we presume that it exhibits the workings of the heart in such a manner as is calculated to extend our knowledge of the human mind; at any rate, it is not to be denied, that it naturally and strongly suggests the following important observation: That when a partially enlightened zeal is confined to a few points relating to the externals of religion, or the peculiarities of a party, it has a tendency to become vehement and ungovernable in proportion as those who are under its influence are incapable to satisfy a judicious and enlightened enquirer, either as to the truth or importance of those topics by which it has been excited, and at the same time is in danger of bewildering the understanding and perverting the heart so completely, as to lead out its votaries to make the most daring attacks on justice, humanity and truth, under the specious plea of zeal for God, a concern for religion, and a regard for the best interests of their fellow-men.

When old Michael le Tellier, chancellor of France, had subscribed the paper by which the edict of Nantz was revoked—a deed by which nearly five hundred thousand Protestants were driven into poverty, exile, imprisonment or death, he cried out in an extacy of joy, “Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation (d).”

Having thus brought our intercourse with the session to a conclusion, let us now attend to those papers which were presented to the presbytery, which met at Calton, November the 9th, 1796; after which we shall give a brief view of what passed at that meeting itself; and as the only paper of importance presented at that time, of which we hitherto have taken no notice, was a remonstrance, &c. against the decision of presbytery at Douglas in August 1796, we shall now give it entire; but, previous to our doing so, it will

(d) It is deserving of notice, that this selfish and ferocious, though seemingly well meaning bigot, actually died in the course of that year in which he had signed this deed. Compare page 7th with page 178th of the 9th vol. of Voltaire's Works, translated by Smollet, &c.

be proper to insert an altered copy of that deed against which it was framed.

Douglas, 17th August, 1796.

“ A reference was made by the Collegiate Session of Sandhills and Glasgow to the Presbytery, and the papers which the session had received from the people concerning the matters contained in it were transmitted, together with the minutes of the session’s proceedings in the business, which were all read. The first article, upon the consideration of which the presbytery entered, was a complaint against some of the members of that session and congregation, for attending a sermon preached by a minister of the established church, at a meeting of the missionary society of Glasgow. The presbytery *unanimously* agreed, that THIS WAS SINFUL AND OFFENSIVE, and enjoin the session to call the OFFENDERS in their congregation on that head before them, and to deal with them, to bring them to a sense of the SINFULNESS and OFFENSIVENESS THEREOF, and to CENSURE them ACCORDINGLY.

“ Extracted by *Archibald Mason, P. Clk.*”

“ To the rev. the Moderator, and the Remanent Members of the Reformed Presbytery, to meet at Calton, Nov. 9th, 1796, the representation, remonstrance, and supplication of the subscribers, members of the Reformed Congregation of Glasgow, &c. humbly sheweth,

“ That temporal felicity depends more on hope than enjoyment, is a position so thoroughly confirmed by experience and observation, as to render it an established maxim in our best theories of the human mind, and we have only to contemplate the gospel method of salvation to know that the same remark is applicable to us, whether we are viewed as men or considered as Christians; and it is pleasing to reflect, that those graces which are implanted in the soul by the divine Spirit, are so admirably adapted to what we thus know to be the state and faculties of man, as to afford the most ample evidence that we are indebted to the same glorious Being for our natural powers and our spiritual endowments.

“ Were a further proof of this required it might be obtained by investigating the nature, tendency, and operation of those graces themselves, by which it would appear, that they all pre-suppose and are accommodated to what we have been considering as the present situation of man. Faith is the evidence of those things which we have not seen, and the substance of those things which we hope to enjoy. Patience has her perfect work in enabling us to wait, after we have done the will of God, until we receive the accomplishment of the promises; and hope acts as the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, by penetrating to, and fixing within the veil, whether the Forerunner hath for us entered.

“ The objects of our faith and hope divide themselves into those

which are exhibited by such promises as are to be fulfilled in time, and those the fulfilment of which is only to be enjoyed at the consummation of all things, and through the unceasing ages of eternity. Waving the latter entirely, we have to remark, that the former may be sub-divided into two classes, the one including those promises which have a relation to ourselves as individuals, the other comprehending those which respect the public interest of religion in the world.

“ During the Old Testament dispensation there was one grand object to which the faith, the hopes, and the desires of all true believers were principally directed; this was nothing else than the appearance of the blessed Shiloh, who was to come from Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob; hence we find the father of the faithful himself exemplifying in his own person what we may suppose to have been the exercise of all his spiritual seed. He looked to the fulness of time, and from that prospect derived the most exalted of his pleasures, and the most refined of his enjoyments: ‘ Your father Abraham saw my day afar off, and he rejoiced and was glad;’ nay, it is the general characteristic of the Old Testament worthies, that they ‘ all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off they received them, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.’ They anxiously expected and earnestly desired the appearance of the blessed Shiloh, they ‘ waited for the consolation of Israel,’ and with the utmost solicitude they breathed out their ardent wishes, ‘ O that the salvation of God were come out of Zion.’

“ Under the New Testament dispensation, though the object is somewhat varied, yet the exercise in its leading qualities continues to be the same; those supplications and desires which they so fervently uttered for the incarnation of the divine Jesus we are to pour out for the advancement and establishment of his spiritual kingdom, which we are assured shall ultimately reach ‘ from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth’—Men shall not only be blessed in him, but ‘ all nations shall call him blessed.’ These promises, however, are not only to be considered as the ground of our hopes, the object of our faith, and the standard of our prayers, but also as an engaging call and powerful excitement to the active discharge of those duties which seem to have a certain, perhaps a necessary connection with their accomplishment. When we hear it declared, that ‘ the heathen people shall fear the Lord’s most holy name,’ a question naturally occurs, how shall they fear him in whom they do not believe? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall any one preach unless he be sent? and how shall he be sent, unless Christians are roused from their lethargy and supineness, and exert themselves with a humble depen-

dence on the promised aids of the holy Spirit, to make the name of our divine Redeemer known to the uttermost ends of the earth? Nay, unless every endeavour to which we are competent is used to second our prayers, it seems impossible to defend ourselves from the charge brought against those who satisfied themselves with barren wishes, saying, 'Be ye clothed and be ye warm; ' but in the mean time gave no one article by which their wishes might have been realized.

" Entertaining a strong persuasion, that the exertions of human agency are to be used in a subserviency to sovereign goodness and almighty power, in accomplishing the ' glorious things which have been spoken of the city of our God,' it was impossible for us to remain unmoved and indifferent spectators of the late pious endeavours to send the gospel of the great God and our Saviour among the benighted Heathens. We have therefore no hesitation in saying, that the date of our attachment to this laudable undertaking is coeval with the first notice which we obtained of its nature and object: we have however to add, that this attachment was greatly strengthened by a circumstance which, though it may appear trivial in itself, yet, on account of the influence it has had on our conduct, it may be proper to mention: The greater part of our number had been regular readers, and were ardent admirers of the Evangelical Magazine: it is a fact generally known, that the present missionary societies, are, under Providence, in a great measure indebted for their existence to a letter which appeared in that pious work. The avidity with which we had been accustomed to peruse its contents, prevented such a luminous idea from escaping our observation. Our attention having been thus engaged, it was afterwards gradually and progressively fixed, by the accumulated mass of information, relating to this object, which from time to time was laid before the public, through the channel of this truly interesting and respectable publication.

Through this medium therefore we beheld the "little cloud, like a man's hand," diffusing itself wider and wider over the church of Christ, and pouring down its benign influence on the hearts of evangelical Christians of all denominations; we perceived them laying aside their unhappy broils, forgetting their former animosities, and uniting on the most solid of all foundations, that of evangelical truth, to promote the most laudable of all designs, the salvation of sinners, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. We glory in saying, that we caught a small portion of that Spirit which seemed to pervade and animate the breasts of Christians in general, and we longed for an opportunity to manifest the cordiality and sincerity of our attachment to the principles and object of this pleasing undertaking.

" A proposal which was made in the summer of 1795, at a congregational meeting, furnished us with an opportunity pub-

licky to evidence the friendship which we entertained for the missionary scheme: this proposal had for its object the formation of a corresponding meeting of delegates from the various societies belonging to our congregation, in and about Glasgow, for the purpose of social prayer and other religious exercises connected therewith.

“ To this proposal, such of our number as had an opportunity, gave their most cordial concurrence; articles were accordingly framed, and the principal object of the institution was stated to be the supplicating a throne of grace for the speedy accomplishment of those glorious things which have been spoken with relation to the city of our God; and on the evening of the 21st of Sept. 1795, being the very night on which the London missionary society was formed, we on that very account had an extraordinary meeting for prayer, in which we joined sweet counsel with some of those persons who have since been our most violent prosecutors, in praying for the success of that very society, for an adherence to the leading principles of which we are now deemed unworthy of the enjoyment of church privileges.

“ When the report was circulated, that endeavours were using to establish a missionary society in Glasgow, we felt the most anxious solicitude for the success of the measure; we at the same time foresaw, that notwithstanding the desirableness of the design when considered in itself, yet the means adopted to give it effect, might have been so remote from our ideas of a scriptural association, as to prevent us from co-operating with our feeble aid towards the attainment of its salutary design. Had any other doctrines been announced as the basis of their union than those which are generally distinguished by the term evangelic truth, or had any other gospel been intended for the Heathen than that of Christ and him crucified, we could neither have contemplated their association with delight, nor sanctioned their meetings with our presence.

“ But when we beheld the Glasgow missionary society occupying a basis which we are persuaded that God himself hath laid in Zion, and when we saw them rearing a superstructure ‘ on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being exhibited as the chief corner stone,’ our fears were dissipated, our wishes were gratified, our hopes were realized; and from an institution founded upon such principles, and embracing such an object, we could neither withhold our slender pecuniary aid, our warmest good wishes, nor our decided approbation.

“ Such were the sentiments which pervaded our minds when it was announced that a sermon was to be delivered to the society by one of its members, and that evangelical ministers, of different denominations, were to unite in observing the public religious services of the day—our minds were warmed with the charming prospect—we did attend—and our ‘ witness is in heaven, and our re-

cord is on high,' that our words are not too expressive for our feelings, when we declare, that a more delightful and captivating scene our eyes never beheld, if christian love, if the workings of a fervent and disinterested zeal for the propagation of the gospel, and the salvation of guilty sinners, are calculated to excite our attachment, gain our esteem, and secure our approbation; we certainly do think, that these acts of the mind have seldom had a more suitable object than on that occasion.

" What then must have been our feelings, when we were soon afterwards told from the pulpit, that nothing had a greater tendency to debauch the conscience than occasional hearing (e) ? And when it was abundantly evident, that our attendance on the missionary sermon was considered as such by the speaker, who at the same time called on his audience to mark those who caused divisions contrary to the doctrine which they had received, and avoid them. In what light he wished this doctrine to be understood, it perhaps would be rash in us to determine, but its real effects were not unlike what we might suppose to have arisen from throwing a

(e) It will readily occur, that those ministers who think, that nothing has a greater tendency to debauch the conscience than occasional hearing, should intimate the sin and danger thereof, whenever they perceive a number of occasional hearers attending their own ministrations. But it is worthy of remark, that though the reformed presbytery have found it to be sinful and offensive to attend on a gospel sermon, delivered by a minister of Jesus Christ, on a week day, to a missionary society; yet they themselves have been long accustomed to encourage occasional hearing, and that on occasions in which at least some of these alleviating circumstances could have no place.

It is perfectly known that they studiously avoid dispensing the holy ordinance of the supper, at those times on which any of the other presbyterian denominations in the neighbourhood are engaged in the same exercise; and though we have witnessed thousands of occasional hearers attending some of these solemnities, yet we do not remember a single instance, in which either the sin or danger of their occasional attendance was pointed out: nay, such is their eagerness to obtain occasional hearers, notwithstanding their aversion to occasional hearing, that though there is a meeting-house at Glasgow, sufficient to contain as many people as perhaps ever joined with them at one solemnity, yet, in order to excite a multitude of other denominations to attend, they generally dispense this ordinance in the fields, at the distance of an hour's walk from Glasgow, and erect a separate tent, solely for the purpose of accommodating (or, on their principles, debauching the conscience of) other denominations; and all communicants are strictly enjoined not to attend at the tent erected for this species of preaching. How to reconcile such conduct to their ideas of occasional hearing is absolutely beyond our comprehension; they surely will not pretend that this dangerous species of hearing changes its very nature, when any of their ministers are preaching; and, instead of being sinful and offensive, becomes salutary and beneficial; yet, without such a supposition, it seems impossible to conceive how they can reconcile their conduct to their own minds. But we will leave it to others to reconcile the conduct of the reformed presbytery, on a supposition which would more than insinuate that their presumption can only be equalled by the lofty claims of that aspiring visionary, Emmanuel Swedenberg*, or the arrogant pretensions of that arch fanatic, Richard Brothers†.

* See an account of Swedenberg and his system, at the close of Gregory's History of the Christian Church. London 1790.

† Those who wish to become fully acquainted with the absurd ravings of this supposed or real maniac, must have recourse to his Prophecies, &c. but all that is worth the knowing of his system, if it deserves the name, may be found in the Monthly Review for May 1795.

burning torch among materials of such a combustible nature as only wanted the aid of a spark to rise into a flame. Accordingly, at a meeting of session, holden at Calton May the 30th, being the first time that court had convened, after the delivery of the fore-stated doctrine, delegates from a variety of persons appeared and presented, what they were pleased to denominate two papers of grievances, in which our conduct, in having attended the missionary sermon was delineated in the most heavy and forbidding colours, and nothing else than submitting to church censure for the past, and abandoning the society in word and deed for the future, would appease them. The session, however, seemed unwilling to carry matters to such an extremity; but, after having heard two of our number at some length, they gratified our prosecutors so far as to express judicially their disapprobation of our conduct, and then referred the whole matter to the presbytery, which was to meet at Douglas in August following.

" We certainly had some right to expect that a becoming check would now be given to this frivolous and vexatibus prosecution; for although we had entertained the strongest persuasion that the motives in which it originated, and by which it hitherto had been conducted, were in general upright, yet we might have been permitted, respectively to insinuate, that both its origin and progress were more strongly marked by the intemperate feelings of the heart than the sober dictates of a well-informed understanding.

" But it was now to be examined and discussed by the concentrated penetration, sagacity, and wisdom of the reformed presbytery, where those qualities which characterise the Gentleman, the Scholar, the Christian, and the Divine, were to be found united. Here, most assuredly, were a body of men, by whom the dictates of mistaken zeal, the effusions of bigotry, and the clamours of prejudice, were likely to be divested of that fallacious, but imposing appearance, which, unhappily for mankind, they have too frequently and too successfully assumed.

" It was therefore with an emotion of surprise, mingled with regret, that we heard it reported, soon after the meeting of presbytery, that the rev. body, to whom we now have the honour to address ourselves, had pronounced judicially, that our conduct, in attending said sermon, "*was sinful and offensive*" We would have fondly hoped, that although this report might not be altogether unfounded, yet that, like most other facts, which have become a topic of public conversation, it had received additional matter, or a different colouring at every recital.

" We were indeed certainly informed that the business had been remitted to the session, with instructions; and as few states of the mind are more irksome than suspense, we looked forward to their first meeting with feelings nearly allied to the most anxious solicitude.

" The session was at last intimated to be holden at Calton, on Monday the 20th of August, previous to which day a verbal citation was given to the greater part of those who had attended the missionary sermon; but for reasons wholly unknown to us, others, who were in the same predicament, were overlooked: however, four of our number appeared at the bar of the session; the deed of presbytery was produced and read, by which it appeared, that public rumour had been so far from magnifying what we humbly conceived to be its stains, that, with uncommon modesty, it had thrown a veil over their most uncomely features.

" By that deed this rev. body had declared our conduct to be sinful and offensive; they had enjoined the session to cite us before them, and endeavour to convince us of our sinful and offensive conduct, and censure us accordingly.

" Such is the tenor of that deed, against which we now deem it to be our indispensable duty to lift up our feeble voice; and such are the leading circumstances which preceded, and, at least, ostensibly, gave rise to its enactment. We beg leave to remonstrate against it.

" 1. Because it seems to have been enacted with haste, if not with precipitation, and to have proceeded on a lame and mutilated view of the subject; the proof of this is to be found by remarking that no one of the persons concerned had ever been heard at the bar of the presbytery, either personally or by commissioners; the court must therefore have founded their decision wholly on abstract principles, without having that degree of that species of information which seems to have been requisite to enable them to ascertain, with precision, the manner in which these principles ought to have been applied in the case before them, as the parties interested had never been allowed an opportunity to state, explain, or defend, the principles on which they acted in attending said sermon. But we beg leave to say, that we know of no general principle so clear and certain in itself, and of such an easy application to this very nice and delicate question, as could warrant the rev. Presbytery, either in the eye of justice or propriety, to decide the matter on such a footing (*f*). That this deed is founded on a lame and mutilated view of the subject will appear sufficiently evident, when it is observed that the session had, either from inattention or design, retained in

(*f*) It perhaps might have been added that the spirit, if not the letter of our Saviour's directions relative to the management of offences, had been overlooked by both the presbytery and session, neither of these courts having ever deemed it requisite to appoint a committee of their number to deal with us in a private manner. In no one instance was their conduct towards us regulated, or so much as occasionally softened, by the mild and conciliating methods of private instruction, but the whole was conducted by the most rigorous and unbending forms of judicial procedure: nay, in as much as the presbytery cut us off from communion, without having so much as cited us to appear at their bar, we apprehend that they trampled the plainest and most sacred principles of justice under foot.

their own hands certain papers of material importance in this business; among which, we have to mention two letters that had been addressed to the session, explanatory of the sentiments which actuated two of our number, respecting the matter at issue; and also two petitions to which the signatures of a number of respectable characters in the communion of our church were appended, craving that for the reasons assigned, moderation and forbearance, might be exercised towards us. What renders this circumstance more deserving of attention is, that the subscribers of at least one of these petitions, requested that it should be transmitted to the last meeting of presbytery, if it so happened that the business to which it related should then be referred to them.

“ 2. Because this decision seems to have issued from, and has a tendency to perpetuate that unhappy propensity which so much prevails in some churches, to constitute the slightest variation of sentiment a term of christian communion—a practice which seems to be unauthorised by Scripture, and has been productive of the most pernicious effects; and we are sorry to observe, that in our church this propensity has, of late, assumed the most alarming aspect; matters, which she at least ought to have considered as of doubtful disputation, have been placed on a level with the most flagrant errors or the most open irregularities. In consequence of which, the flock of Christ, that he came to seek and to save, and which he hath enjoined all his ministers to nourish and protect, have been discharged from participating in those enjoyments which he hath purchased for them with his own blood. A member of this rev. court has, in the presence of his brethren, and in the face of the sun, most wantonly invaded those liberties wherewith our Lord and Saviour hath made his people free, by debarring from a seat at his holy table, all those who held it lawful to dispense the holy ordinance of the Lord’s Supper every Sabbath-day, or maintained that this ordinance is not an extraordinary institution, or that an extraordinary degree of sermon is not necessary on such occasions, or words to that effect. By such an unwarrantable and unprecedented mode of procedure, the amiable virtues of moderation, charity, and forbearance, which smooth the rugged paths of life, have, in a great measure, been banished from among us; all rational freedom of enquiry has been discarded, integrity and openness of character destroyed, and the avenues of intellectual improvement completely blocked up (g).

“ The real, but pernicious tendency of this propensity, has been recently exemplified in another instance, which seems to have set candor and moderation at open defiance: At a congregational meet-

(g) We cannot help thinking that there was a threefold impropriety in this mode of debarras.

1. The sentiments it supposed erroneous seem to be founded on fact. 2. Admitting that the minister and session of that place had deemed them to be unsupported by

ing, convened at Calton since the enactment of this deed, the parties, whose conduct it had found to be sinful and offensive, were publickly declared to be *scandalous* persons; and said deed was adduced as sole proof of the justness of the charge. It was then put to

satisfying evidence, yet they ought not to have considered a mistake on this point of so much importance, as to preclude those who had the misfortune to entertain it, from the enjoyment of church privileges. 3. As this perhaps is the first instance to be met with, in the history of the christian church, in which these opinions were considered of such an erroneous or pernicious nature, as to render those who had imbibed them, unworthy of church fellowship: it must have been highly improper for any *minister*, or *minister and session*, to introduce the practice of establishing them as *terms of communion*—as in doing so, they must have acted on the idea, that *they were competent* to announce and enforce new terms of admission on the church of Christ. But we know of no one denomination of Presbyterians who have ever considered a *minister*, or *minister and session*, as *competent* to exercise such an high act of authority.

Besides, we cannot see how the rev. member alluded to can be acquitted from the charge of inconsistency, in as much as he seems, on the preceding evening, to have required an unqualified assent to those very opinions, which he deemed so pernicious on the following day.

It is certain, that on the evening alluded to, an *unqualified assent* to all the doctrines contained in the Confession of Faith, Catechism, Directory for Divine Worship, Testimony, &c. &c. was stated as an essential prerequisite to the enjoyment of church privileges. Now, let any one compare the doctrines thus elevated on the Saturday, with those which were so completely depressed on the following day, and then judge, whether the one hand was not engaged in pulling down, what the other had been employed in building up:

On Saturday's evening an *unqualified assent* was required to the following propositions:

“ The outward and *ordinary* means of salvation are the word, *sacraments*, and *prayer* *.”

“ The reading of the Scriptures—the preaching of the Word—singing of psalms—the due administration of the *sacraments*, are all parts of the *ordinary* religious worship of God †.”

“ The Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is frequently to be celebrated: when this sacrament cannot with convenience be *frequently* administered, it is requisite that public warning be given the Sabbath-day before the administration thereof; and that either then, or on some day of that week, something concerning that ordinance, and the due preparation thereunto, and participation thereof, be taught ‡.”

How much is the situation of church members to be lamented, when the ministers of religion blend such inconsistencies with the most sacred rite of our holy religion, and employ that solemn institution, which ought to be regarded as the most expressive emblem of Christian unity and love, as an engine to promote dissension, animosity, and party spirit?

* See Shorter Catechism, question 88th.

† See Confession of Faith, chap. xxi. sec. 5.

‡ See the Directory, under the title of the Celebration of the Communion, &c.—Glasgow Edition, 1785.

On the forenoon of the Lord's-day, all those persons were debarred who held,

1. That the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is not an *extraordinary* institution.

2. That it is *lawful* for Christians to dispense this ordinance every Sabbath-day.

3. Or who said, that an *extraordinary* degree of public sermon was not *necessary* on such occasions.

the vote, and carried in the affirmative, that we were unfit to give our suffrage in choosing persons to manage the funds of the congregation, notwithstanding that we hold a real share of these funds, and had, to that very day, contributed regularly towards their support.

“ Convinced as we are, that the deed in question, together with those improprieties, by which it has been either preceded, accompanied, or followed, are all founded on the same inadequate premises, and do all lead to the same absurd conclusions; we view them conjunctly as the component parts of one whole, and against that whole we deem it our incumbent duty to declare and maintain an open warfare.

“ There is much room to think, that no proposition or opinion ought to be made a term of church communion, which evangelical Christians of common capacity may be unable to perceive a foundation for in the Word of God *; and we are inclined to believe, that no tenet or opinion whatever, not comprehended in this definition, ought to be enforced as a term of christian communion; and to the ignorance or neglect of this important truth, the greatest part of that intemperate and mistaken zeal, which induces us to cast all those out of church communion who exhibit the least shade of difference from ourselves, ought to be referred.

“ Entertaining the most fixed aversion at such a procedure, we acted accordingly, and neither exhibited our sentiments, nor prescribed our conduct as a rule for others: we never told our brethren, that they must either adopt our sentiments, and conform to our practice, or we would hold communion with them no longer. And we beg leave to say, that in doing so, at least with regard to some of the points in dispute, we condescended much farther to them than they are desired to do to us, when we request them to consider all the particular sentiments they are now enforcing on us as clearly belonging to that class of things which the apostle himself terms matters of doubtful disputation, and bear in mind, that in all cases of this kind, no one is entitled to judge, condemn, or set at nought his brother; but every one must, as he shall be accountable to Him who judgeth the heart, be fully persuaded in his own mind. We are perfectly willing to be considered as the weak, but it does not appear to be any very unreasonable request to crave our stronger brethren, to bear with our infirmities, and not altogether please themselves.

“ 3. Because this deed, together with that conduct which it seems to have inspired, have a direct tendency to counteract the present apparent design of divine Providence to advance the progress of knowledge, liberty, virtue, and religion at home, and to diffuse them abroad throughout the habitable world.

* See Appendix, No. 3d.

" When we take an extensive and accurate survey of the present aspect of divine Providence, though a variety of discouraging circumstances present themselves to our view, yet it is impossible not to form a sanguine expectation respecting a seemingly approaching state of things. The vast improvements which have been made in arts, tend to facilitate and abridge labour, and to transfer some of the most painful and laborious operations from our species to the brutal creation, and in many instances to inanimate matter; by which means the powers of the mind have scope afforded them to embrace more exalted objects, and act in a more extensive sphere; and, it is to be hoped, that the progress of these improvements will ultimately admit a much greater portion of our time to be bestowed on intellectual, moral, and religious subjects, than hath occurred in any preceding state of society. Our skill in navigation hath opened an intercourse between the most savage and civilized parts of the globe, so that the enlightened European hath an opportunity to communicate, " to roving tribes and wandering barbarians, the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion." The important science of legislation is more attended to, and perhaps is better understood, than at any former period; but, above all, the art of printing has given to the intelligent and learned an instrument by which they can secure, extend, and perpetuate their acquisitions in knowledge and wisdom: by this admirable invention the discoveries of the fortunate, the labours of the studious, and the researches of the man of science, which were formerly confined to a few, are now laid open to all. This, at present, is so much the case, that those publications in divinity, morality, philosophy, politics, and in civil and ecclesiastical history, the composing of which may have been the work of years, can be perused by the mechanic, the farmer, and the man of business in a few days, and at a very moderate expence; and, when to this we add, the present agreeable movement among evangelical Christians, to unite at home, on the foundation of evangelical truth to send the gospel abroad, a new scene seems to open, which affords, even to the eye of reason, the most delightful prospect.

" Perhaps we might have added, that those very circumstances, which, at first sight, may appear exceptions to these general remarks, will, on a nearer inspection, be found highly subservient towards the promoting of the same benevolent design. Before knowledge and truth are established, ignorance and error must be overthrown; but that in demolishing those systems which are founded in error, and supported by ignorance, superstition, and prejudice; many disagreeable incidents will occur, is naturally to be expected, and that in going on towards perfection with those systems which are radically found, much opposition may be encountered, accords with the experience of all those who have hitherto attempted the arduous and grating work of reform; but, until such a time as sys-

tems of the former kind are destroyed, and those of the latter description divestd of every unscripural idea, those things that are must be shaken, in order that the things which cannot be shaken, may remain.

“ It seems therefore to be our immediate and indispensable duty not to discourage and oppose, but to call forth all our energy in seconding this apparent tendency of divine Providence, to shake the throne of ignorance, error, superstition, and bigotry at home, in order that we may found our religious sytem on the stable basis of truth, and have all our attachments and aversions, in religious matters, regulated by knowledge, not by custom, habit, and prejudice; then, and then only, shall we be enabled to exhibit our holy religion in its genuine and unadulterated form, as resting on evidence, and tending to utility; then, and then only, can we reasonably expect that it will form an immovable barrier, impeding the destructive progress of that flood of sceptism, deism, and even atheism, which threatens to swallow up the inheritance of the Lord. Mean time, let us be active in seconding every effort of divine Providence to invade the kingdom of darkness abroad, by sending among the benighted Heathens those glorious truths by which men live, and in the practical belief of which consists the life of our souls, for it is life eternal to know the true God, and Jefus Christ, whom he hath sent.

“ 4. because it supposes, that to hear a sermon, delivered on any occasion whatever, by any other minister than those of our own communion, comes under the description of occasional hearing; that all such hearing is sinful; and particularly, that our attendance on the missionary sermon necessarily implied an approbation of the constitution, &c. of those churches, of which the ministers, who then officiated, are members.

“ We have clasped these positions together, partly because they appear to have a very intimate relation to one another, and seem to be so completely identified, as to render it presumable, that they must be either wholly received, or wholly rejected—and partly because they are propositions, from all of which we beg leave to withhold our assent, until we perceive suitable evidence adduced to support them.

“ The rev. presbytery are fully aware of the difficulties which must be encountered, in attempting to substantiate a negative proposition; and, they will readily allow, that according to the most legitimate rules of reasoning, the labour of proving always attaches to those who hold the affirmative. We might therefore dismiss this article entirely, with demanding a proof of the controverted propositions: But we shall waive the exercise of this our privilege, at least, in its utmost extent, and proceed to remark, that to hear the gospel preached, by a minister of Christ, can never be considered as sinful, or improper in itself; the impropriety or unlawful-

ness thereof, whether real or pretended, must ever be supposed to arise from other circumstances. We are apt to imagine, that our own principles will allow us to consider every one as a minister of Jesus Christ, who hath received presbyterial ordination, and preaches the doctrines contained and implied in the Address of the Glasgow missionary society; it being always understood, that his life and conversation are such as becometh the gospel of Christ. Now, is it not supposable that a minister, possessed of these qualifications, may be found to preach the gospel in such circumstances as those qualities, and those only shall be recognized; on account of which we still allow him to be a minister of Christ, notwithstanding those objections to which that particular church with which he stands connected is liable. We certainly think, that this case is quite supposable, and, we firmly believe, that it is the precise state of the subject now before us. We frankly grant, that we cannot do any thing which necessarily implies an approbation of the constitution, &c. of the present national church, without contradicting the principles contained in our testimony, and therefore, as adherers to this testimony, we could have little freedom, in ordinary cases, to sanction any meeting with our presence, expressly assembled on the footing of that constitution.

“ But here the matter seems to have been widely different: the people then assembled were not an association, founded on, or recognizing the peculiar sentiments by which any of the presbyterian bodies now existing in this country are characterized; but were met together on the basis of the doctrines contained and implied in the missionary Address; and it was the principles and object of the Glasgow missionary society, and nothing else, which were recognized by them on that occasion: nay, it seems material to remark, that this matter is not even left to be explained by inference and analogy, for it is expressly stipulated, in said bond of co-operation, that, though the persons associating are understood to adopt those evangelic truths, which constitute the basis of their union, yet they are not to be considered as thereby renouncing those other sentiments from which their distinguishing appellations are derived; they only agree, that these shall neither be brought forward, nor acted on, in so far as this business is concerned. But even though this had not been so clearly and unequivocally expressed, we should still have had room to observe, that as the maintaining of the peculiarities of any of those churches entitled no man either to preach or to hear on that occasion, there seems to be some difficulty in conceiving, and much more in believing, that the having done either the one or the other, must necessarily be considered as implying an approbation of these peculiarities.

“ We know only of one method by which the force of these observations can be evaded, and that is by objecting, that no association, having religion either for its basis or object, ought to be

formed, even though the purpose in view be lawful in itself, unless the whole peculiarities of our scheme of principles are not only not opposed, but adopted as the foundation of the union; and that, to countenance such an association, if formed, would be sinful and offensive. If no such objection is brought forward, we will be permitted to say, that the foregoing reasoning is absolutely conclusive; and we hope the rev. presbytery will act accordingly, by immediately cancelling their former deed; but, if they have recourse, for its vindication, to those ideas which this objection involves, then we must remonstrate against it.

" 5. Because it plainly implies, that to associate with any other body of Presbyterians, towards the attainment of what we ourselves allow to be a lawful object, is not only improper and offensive, in the eyes of our church, but sinful and offensive in the sight of God; and, consequently, that all those who co-operate with, or countenance these bodies, or individuals connected with them, in their present endeavours to send the gospel to the heathen world, are, thereby, violating the law of God, notwithstanding that their exertions, in this case, may have been the result of the most thorough conviction, and that conviction the effect of the most honest endeavours to know their duty.

" That consistency leads us out to say, that those who differ from our principles, in the most minute article, are in so far mistaken, is evident. That all errors and mistakes ought to be avoided, as much as possible, is certain; and that an adherence to the slightest mistake, from culpable ignorance, obstinate prejudice, or vitiated dispositions, is sinful, we have no hesitation to assert (b); but that

(b) We would take the liberty to request the reader to consider all that is advanced, in any of these sheets, with regard to mutual forbearance—truths less clearly revealed, or of less importance—liberty of conscience—rights of private judgment, &c as qualified by the sentiments just stated in the text. We entertain a thorough conviction, that it is the indispensable duty of every man to enquire after, receive, and obey the whole truth, and reject all that is opposite thereto; and we have no hesitation in saying, that to despise or reject any known truth, because it is not of sufficient importance to be formed into a term of christian communion, must be highly criminal: But it is surely one thing to be actuated by a sincere love to all truth ourselves, and it is quite a different matter to enforce every proposition which we conceive to be true, as a term of communion, on our fellow Christians.

With regard to the phrases, *liberty of conscience* and *the rights of private judgment*, we are apt to think, that the opposition which some well-meaning people manifest against them, is to be traced to their supposing that they are intended to signify, that every individual has a right to judge on religious and other topics as he pleases, and to receive or reject as humour or caprice may dictate, without any regard to the supreme Law-giver.

We would fondly hope that, notwithstanding the depravity of mankind, few persons have ever adopted and vindicated this import of these phrases; but, if any have done so, with them the rational and genuine friends of civil and religious liberty have no concern; by them they have ever been understood to denote that inalienable right, which every man possesses, to reject all human authority in matters of religion; not that he may think, and judge, and act as he pleases, but in order that he may subject his conscience only, and wholly, to the authority of God.

those peculiarities by which such evangelical Presbyterians as differ from us are distinguished, have either originated in such causes, or involve ideas of such a sinful and pernicious tendency, as to render our mutual co-operation, in promoting a lawful object, sinful and offensive in the sight of God, are positions to which we can neither accede nor submit.

“ Besides, it more than insinuates, that the great and fundamental truths in which all evangelical Presbyterians acquiesce, do not form a sufficient foundation for such an union among them as is necessary towards their co-operating together in sending the glad tidings of salvation to the benighted Heathen, whereas we are humbly of opinion, that these glorious and salutary truths are not only a sufficient basis for such an union at home as is necessary to effectuate this valuable purpose, but seem to constitute or involve all those truths which ought, at any rate, in the first instance, to be communicated to the heathen world; for we cannot help thinking that it is not those tenets which are peculiar to this, that, or the other denomination of evangelical Christians, whether residing in this, that, or the other country, which ought to be principally or more immediately propagated among the Heathen (while some of these ought perhaps never to be introduced among them), but those precious truths, which are common to all the people of God, and by the practical belief of which they are made wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus; to say otherwise, strongly implies, that we deem it more eligible that the Heathen should continue in their present forlorn situation, than that Christianity should be transmitted to them through the medium of any institution which has not previously recognized all the peculiarities of our system—an idea from which we recoil with abhorrence.

“ The slightest degree of reflection will enable us to discern, that a variety of our disputes have originated in local circumstances, and certain transactions of a peculiar nature, which have blended themselves with our civil and ecclesiastical history: it surely is not easy to see what advantage the inhabitants of the friendly or society

“ It is not, however (says Mr. Roscoe), so much for the tenets of their religious creed, as for the principles on which they founded their dissent, that the reformers are entitled to the thanks of posterity: That *right of private judgment*, which they claimed for themselves, they could not refuse to others; and, by a mode of reasoning, as simple as it was decisive, mankind arrived at the knowledge of one of these great truths which form the basis of human happiness. It appeared that the denunciations of the church were as ineffectual to condemn as its absolution was to exculpate; and, instead of an intercourse between the man and his *priest*, an intercourse took place between his *conscience* and his *God*.”

We have quoted this passage, not because we approve of *every* idea which it contains (for we do think that, on the whole, it is somewhat inaccurate), but because it seems to place, in a very proper light, the great object we ought to have in view, in contending for liberty of conscience, or the unlimited exercise of the rights of private judgment.

* See the Life of Lorenzo de Medici, vol. ii. p. 282.

islands could derive, from agitating among them discussions which have issued from the character and conduct of a Charles II.—a William III.—the nature of a Scotch burges's oath—a Porteous paper—or a Sanquhar declaration.

“ The propriety of these remarks seems to be much countenanced by our own conduct in parallel instances. It has never entered our imagination, to form either the sentiments of the nominalists on the one hand, or of the realists on the other, into terms of communion (*i*) ; though it is well known, that in both France and Germany, this controversy was disputed with the utmost warmth, during a considerable part of the fifteenth century ; in the course of which, the minds of the adverse parties were occasionally so exasperated against each other, as to induce them, in the plenitude of their zeal, to charge the sentiments of one another with involving the sin against the Holy Ghost (and had these disputes obtained a place, in any of our testimonies, it is hard to say, whether we had been much behind them in the severity of our conclusions) : Neither have we ever deemed it proper, far less necessary, to engross the disputes which have obtained in the Gallican church, concerning Jansenism, Quietism, &c. into our Testimony (*k*).

“ Now, for what reason do we refrain from reviving these and a thousand other controversies, which either have been, or still are agitated among other nations and churches? We presume, that to this only one answer can be given ; but it seems to be equally easy and decisive : They generally were local and limited in their operations and effects, and had either sprung from temporary incidents, or were occasioned by other peculiar circumstances of an insulated nature.

“ If we then are so justly averse from importing foreign controversies into our church, why transmit our local disputes to the heathen world? If we have no wish to admit into Scotland one agitated in France, why transfer one agitated in Scotland to Otaheite? Let us send among them those precious truths in which all real Christians are agreed, these are sufficient to make them wise unto salvation ; and from a consideration of the economy of grace, we have ground to believe, that in exact proportion as any truth is adapted to promote the salvation of sinners, it is calculated to manifest and advance the divine glory. Let us therefore hasten to tell

(*i*) For a historical view of this celebrated dispute, which seems to have had a great influence in the martyrdom of the famous John Huss, the reader may consult Mosheim, vol. iii. page 308, 310, 399, 411, 415.—London, 1790.

But the most satisfactory account that we have met with of the doctrine itself is given by the masterly pen of Dr. Stewart, in his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*. See chap. iv. sec. 2 and 3.

(*k*) For an account of Jansenism, and the disputes it occasioned in France, see the 208th chapter of Voltaire's *Works*, translated from the French by Smollet and others ; and a similar account of Quietism may be found in the 209th chapter of the same work.

them, that there is not another name given under heaven, or among men, by which they can be saved, but the name of Jesus: and let us ever remember, that as they, for some time, may be supposed weak in the faith, they must be received into the arms of our affectionate regard, but are by no means to be discouraged and perplexed with doubtful disputation. We must first lay the foundation, and then proceed to rear the superstructure; having once endeavoured, by every means to which we are competent, to give them a being, we may then reasonably think of consulting their well-being: But, let us never indulge any idea which would lead us out to fold our hands, and sit down contented, while the poor deluded Heathens are perishing for lack of knowledge, rather than co-operate with other evangelical Christians to bring them to the knowledge of the true God and eternal life, because we cannot obtain a previous acquiescence to all the peculiarities of our testimony. Let us first endeavour to make them Christians, and then let us think of a method, by which they may be induced to adopt those sentiments from which we derive our distinguishing appellation.

“ 6. Because it has a woful tendency to darken that pleasing prospect which has begun to unfold itself at home, to the joy and comfort of many, who have been long waiting for the consolation of Israel; such persons have had their pious wishes gratified, and their souls edified and comforted, when witnessing those who have been made partakers of the one faith, the one baptism, the one Spirit, and the one calling, attending to, and acknowledging that they had too long transferred that attention and regard to those shades of difference, by which, in this imperfect state, they perhaps will ever be more or less distinguished, which ought to have been chiefly exercised in contemplating the salutary nature, and practical tendency of those important and glorious truths, in which all real Christians are agreed.

“ How melancholy to reflect, that though Christians of this description have hitherto met daily at the same throne of grace, and are equally related to and interested in him, of whom the whole family in heaven, and in earth, is named; yet, for many ages, they have had no one central point on earth, to which they could all unitedly repair, and thereby give the world a public evidence, that as their beloved is but one, so they also, notwithstanding their numerous shades of difference, arising from the various degrees in which they were enlightened in their understandings, and sanctified in their hearts, yet, as they were all clothed with the same righteousness, justified by the same grace, and sanctified by the same Spirit, so they had all learned, as the elect of God, to put on bowels of mercy, long suffering, and brotherly kindness, forbearing one another in love. Now, such a central point, in our apprehension, is the missionary society; and we are free to say, that our attachment to this institution was no less influenced by a

persuasion that it was eminently calculated to serve this purpose at home, than from the salutary effects which might result from it to the benighted Heathen abroad. Long, too long have we experienced the baneful effects of discussing our unhappy differences with rancour, animosity, and dislike: under the influence of these unamiable and turbulent dispositions, we have forgotten, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, and have too frequently tainted our polemical disquisitions with the black passions of the human heart. The effect has exactly been what we might have foreseen, and ought to have provided against; our differences have increased, our divisions have multiplied, and our mutual jealousies have been strengthened and confirmed: But who can tell what happy effects may now arise from examining our existing differences, under the benign influence of those amiable dispositions, which, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, has a tendency to inspire, and which our co-operating together in promoting the same benevolent design cannot fail to advance. Let us consider evangelic principles as sufficient to excite, nourish, and justify unity of affection; and, under the guidance of this disposition, and those sentiments, let us proceed to make the hopeful experiment, in order to ascertain, whether they may not be found the only means by which we can obtain that uniformity of opinion, which we have been so long and so unsuccessfully pursuing.

“ 7. Because no deed can have any authority over the conscience, unless the court who passed it can give evidence, from Scripture, that it seemed good, not only to them, but also to the Holy Ghost, that it should be enacted: this important truth our church has expressly recognized, and embodied in her standing laws, by which she declares, that “ nothing is to be sustained, as a ground of church censure, which hath not been declared censurable by the Word of God, or some act or universal custom of the church, agreeable thereto.”

“ But it is remarkable, that though the deed in question finds our conduct to be *sinful* and *offensive*, and enjoins the session to censure us accordingly, yet no *one* passage of Scripture, or standing law of the church, evidently founded thereon, has been adduced by the rev. presbytery, authorising or confirming their judgment; therefore, ‘ Reprobate silver shall men call it, for the Lord hath rejected it.’

“ 8. Because it is not only destitute of that authority which alone can bind the conscience on the one hand, but seems to look with the most hostile aspect towards, what we humbly conceive to be the *general* scope and tendency of divine revelation, on the other.

“ The sum of all those precepts, which prescribe our duty to mankind, is concisely, but emphatically expressed, in that rule which enjoins us to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, were

they placed in our circumstances and we in their's. Now, had we been in the state of the poor ignorant Heathen, and they in our's, let us, as in the presence of Him ' who hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth,' ask ourselves, not what we then would have asked from them, because an infatuated satisfaction with our own deplorable condition would have been one of the most prominent features in our character; but let us say in seriousness what they, who were fully apprised of the horrible nature of our condition, ought to have considered, as its real language, to perceive us frisking about, with unconcern, on the brink of that dreadful gulph, which was yawning to receive us, must, in their benevolent minds, have excited the most lively compassion; and they could be at no loss to discern, that the language of our situation could be expressed in no fitter terms than, come over and help us. But we ought to remember that what our condition would have been in the case supposed, that their's is, with a mournful reality, at this very day; and it surely becomes us to consider who hath made us to differ from others; and what have we which we have not received. For had not sovereign goodness raised up some one or another of our fellow men to convey to our remote island the glad tidings of salvation, we who are now met to discuss, and perhaps finally to condemn, the present association for sending the gospel to the heathen world, had this very day been worshipping stocks and stones, for we, as a people, were once ignorant of the true God, and therefore did service to them, who by nature are no gods; during which period we were 'led away with divers lusts, deceiving and being deceived.' those favours and advantages, which were unquestionably conferred on us by some one part or another of the then christian world, and that over discouragements, of which we can form but a feeble conception, we are now under obligations, by the law of heaven and the principles of gratitude, to return to those who are presently sitting in the regions and shadow of death, who are 'aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no well grounded hopes, because living without God in the world.'

" 9. Because this deed is diametrically opposite to those *particular* precepts, which enjoin it as a duty upon the christian church, to embrace every opportunity that occurs to send the gospel to the uttermost ends of the earth. ' Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,' &c. is an injunction which not only authorises, but obliges the christian church, and particularly her ministers, to improve every opening of divine Providence to send the knowledge of a Saviour to the benighted Heathen; this duty we most clearly recognise whenever we prefer the expressive, but comprehensive request ' Thy kingdom come'—a petition which at once prescribes what ought to be the leading object of our prayers, and the principal business of our lives; for it is no less unsuitable to the character of a Christian to use prayer without means, than to

use means without prayer; and were any one to assert, that while we prayed for the removal of whatever impeded the progress of the gospel, and yet continued to oppose the present endeavours for its propagation, we were pleading for our own destruction; we should be glad to know by what arguments the allegation could be disproved.

“ 10. Because the whole of the foregoing objections to this deed seem to be countenanced and supported by those reflections, which the many great and precious promises relating to the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom, and the conversion of the Heathen, world seem calculated to suggest; his kingdom ‘ shall reach from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth’—‘ Men shall not only be blessed in him, but all nations shall call him blessed,’ &c. &c.

“ But as amplification on this part of our subject is no less easy than unnecessary, we shall satisfy ourselves with remarking, that all those promises imply the use of means, and the exertions of human agency; the age of miracles has elapsed, the immediate communication of divine inspiration has ceased, and the gift of tongues is no longer conferred; activity, diligence, and unremitting industry, flowing from a pure and ardent, but enlightened and well-regulated zeal, are the means which, under the blessing of heaven, and the agency of the divine Spirit, shall sooner or later overturn the kingdom of ignorance, error, and delusion: ‘ Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased’—‘ The lips of the righteous shall feed many.’ Such are the means which it is our indispensable duty to use, in order that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and if we entertain the remotest apprehensions as to their efficacy, we have only to remember who hath said, ‘ Not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord’—‘ Lo I am with you alway to the end of the world.’

“ But if these observations are well founded, it surely becomes those who have exerted all their influence, whether personal or judicial, to repress the present laudable undertakings, in behalf of the benighted Heathen, seriously to consider on what ground they are treading, when acting a part not altogether unlike to that of the Jews of old, who endeavoured to impede the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, the then heathen world, and therefore says the Spirit of God; ‘ wrath came upon them to the uttermost.’

“ We will not dissemble, and therefore must add, that it has frequently occurred to us, that there exists a striking similarity between the principles on which the present opposition to this measure is founded, and the ideas from which the partially illuminated and prejudiced, though well-meaning followers of Jesus, acted, when they addressed him, saying, ‘ Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth

not us.' But did the divine Jesus encourage such selfish and contracted, though, in all likelihood, well-meant expressions? No, his answer is precisely what, in our humble opinion, this rev. court ought to return to all those who are engaged in prosecuting us for endeavouring to forward the views of the missionary society; 'Forbid them not, for he who is not against us is for us'—' Some (says the inspired apostle) preach Christ of envy, and others of good-will; but seeing that Christ is preached, I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice: to which declaration let us, let the church, let all the habitable world, say amen—amen, yea, and amen.

Such are the principal objections to which we conceive the deed of this rev. court to be liable, and such are the sentiments which forbid us, either to approve of, or acquiesce therein. From all which considerations we beg leave to supplicate, that the rev. presbytery would take the premises under their most serious deliberation; and we would fondly hope, that by so doing, they will find it their duty to exhibit a practical evidence on this occasion, that they highly revere that portion of our standards, which asserts, that "all synods and councils, since the days of the apostles, may err, and many have erred," by razing this deed from their record, and dismissing those groundless and unwarrantable prosecutions, by which either one or all of us have been harassed, as frivolous and vexatious; and allow each individual, in future, to act in these matters according to that measure of light and direction, which God, of his infinite goodness, may be pleased to communicate to him by the instrumentality of his holy Word, mutually forbearing one another in love, and thereby keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We have also humbly to request, that this rev. court would be pleased to take such measures as they in their wisdom shall deem most proper, to review and simplify our present terms of communion, in order that they may correspond with the foregoing definition, which, with the greatest deference to the rev. presbytery, we beg leave to consider, as comprehending every scriptural term of admission: Namely, that nothing be made a term of christian communion which evangelical Christians, of common capacity, in the due use of ordinary means, may be unable to discern a foundation for in the Word of God. We would further most earnestly intreat the rev. court, to discard all inconsistencies from these terms, whether they are more obvious and glaring, or only to be detected by a more minute and accurate investigation; particularly, that they would be pleased to dismiss every idea from our system which insinuates, that our Lord Jesus Christ is not the only King and head of his church, or which supposes, that it is either lawful or proper, for any description of fallible men, to impose their religious system on others, by civil pains; and we humbly solicit, that until such a time as these necessary improvements are carried into effect, that

the rev. presbytery would only require an assent to our present terms, as being nearer to the word of God, as far as the party assenting can judge, than any other to which he has access: and that the Spirit of wisdom, and of might, and of good understanding in the fear of the Lord, may rest upon your assembly, is the fervent desire of

*William Waddell,
John Wingate, jun.
John Euing,
Robert Williamson,*

*William Auld, sen.
Peter Ferguson,
William Rae."*

The next thing which falls under our consideration is the proceedings of that meeting of Presbytery at which this representation, &c. was presented. And here we once intended to have been somewhat copious, and to have given a minute detail of what was said and done, both by the rev. presbytery and ourselves; but we have been determined to deviate from this part of our plan, chiefly by two considerations:

1. Because this work has already grown much beyond that size to which we, for several reasons, wished to confine it.
2. Because we deem ourselves, circumstantiated as we are, unequal to the task of making such a selection from the words and phrases of a long, and perhaps an unpremeditated speech, as would at once do justice to the subject, and be deemed accurate and impartial by the speaker.

The force of these reasons will be more easily perceived, when it is known, that the discussion of this business was begun about five in the afternoon, and continued, with little or no intermission, until between one and two in the morning. Now, it surely will be allowed, that to give a satisfactory and accurate statement of proceedings, extended to such a length, would be equally tedious and difficult; suffice it therefore to observe, that the business was opened by reading all the papers, which *ought* to have been transmitted to the session by the presbytery at their former meeting; after which, the preceding representation, &c. was read and received.

The first thing which the presbytery took under their more immediate consideration was our reasons of protest, declinature, and appeal (a copy of which we have already submitted to the view of our readers); and with regard to it, we have only further to remark, that, in our apprehension, the far greater part of the members gave it as their judgment, that the papers alluded to therein ought to have been transmitted by the session to the former meeting of the superior court; and it is quite obvious, that they thereby virtually recognised the justness and solidity of our leading reasons of protest, &c. But that they had no inclination to enter on a thorough investigation of the merits of this cause, was sufficiently evinced by their avoiding any thing like a formal decision on the business. They

accordingly allowed their disapprobation of the session's conduct to evaporate, by expressing, individually, that these papers ought to have been transmitted; and so much were they disposed to throw a veil over this part of the session's conduct and of their own, with relation to it, that our extract of the minute does not afford the slightest evidence that this subject had ever been before them.

The presbytery then proceeded to judge on the merits of our representation, remonstrance, and supplication; and, on this subject, most of the members delivered their sentiments with much fervor, and at great length. And there is room to believe, that the effect produced by these speeches may be shortly expressed by saying, that they only served, on the one hand, to convince us more fully of the truth of our sentiments, and the propriety of our conduct, and, on the other, to confirm the presbytery, and their partizans, in their unhappy prejudices against both. But whatever be in this, it is well known, that the presbytery terminated the discussion of this business by confirming that decision, by which they had previously pronounced our conduct to have been sinful and offensive, &c. and of consequence, our expulsion from their communion was now judicially sealed.

The critical moment had therefore now arrived, in which we had no other alternative, but either to prostrate our consciences at the shrine of ecclesiastical tyranny, by submitting to a decision, which seemed not to have the semblance of a foundation in the sacred oracles, or to decline the authority of that court who had said, and were now saying to our souls, Bow down, that we may go over you. To the calm and steady eye of reason, but especially to the quick and penetraring eye of an enlightened conscience, to decide between these alternatives must have been an easy matter; but, as men, we are the subjects of social affections and dispositions, as well as of intellectual powers; and, when our social principles have been long, and delightfully exercised, towards a particular body of men, to perceive those ties, by which they and we have been intimately and tenderly united, about to be finally dissolved, is a sight which the mind of man must ever contemplate with aversion and regret. To have divested ourselves of all such emotions on this occasion "would have been impossible, though endeavoured, and perhaps foolish, though possible;" we therefore, before embracing any measure which might prove final, wished to make a pause, in order to consider whether it were not yet possible to reconcile the emotions of friendship with the dictates of conscience, and our affection to man with our duty to God. We accordingly, before stating our sentiments finally on this distressing business, requested a copy of the presbytery's minute, and leave to retire, in order to consider what measures the Lord in his Providence was now calling us to embrace.

But, previous to our retiring, we took the opportunity to en-

quire, whether, on the supposition that we would acquiesce in the presbytery's decision, and discontinue our attendance on the public sermons in future, we should be allowed, in every other respect, to countenance and support the society by word and deed. We were partly induced to propose this question by our having observed, that the presbytery, in the whole course of their animadversions on our sentiments and conduct, had studiously endeavoured to impress the audience with an idea, that our expulsion hinged wholly on our having attended the missionary sermon, and of consequence, on our having persisted to defend, what they were pleased to term occasional or promiscuous hearing ; whereas, we were conscious, that the presbytery's aversion to the principles on which the society depended, if it had not originally inspired, yet had powerfully cherished and fomented all that rancorous animosity of which we had been the objects.

However, to us it appeared quite obvious, that this question went home to the bosom at once, and seemed to be equally undesired and unexpected. The answer thereto was substantially as follows : That though we were to acquiesce in the presbytery's decision, and give over attending such sermons, yet we could not be allowed to attend either the public or private meetings of the society, or give it any other active support (1).

In the course of the discussion to which this question gave rise it was said, that we ought to take the matter under our most serious consideration until the next meeting of presbytery. To this proposal we had no objection, providing that it were understood, that both the presbytery and we were to consider the matter as in suspense until the next meeting ; and if they, in the mean time, would admit us to church privileges on our assenting to their terms of communion, as being, in our apprehension, nearer to the Word of God than any other to which we had access ; but without these things were to be fully conceded, we could give no promise to comply with such a proposal : however, the presbytery gave no coun-

(1) As a specimen of the reasonings on which this selfish and bigotted determination was founded, we shall repeat the substance of what was openly advanced by a leading member of that court, who said, That he could neither attend their public nor private meetings, nor join in prayer with any minister who had been ordained on the footing of a presentation ; neither could he pray for the success of the gospel as preached by such a minister. What the Lord, in the exercise of his sovereignty, might work, by such a person, he would not determine ; but the Scriptures, not the actings of divine sovereignty, were the rule of his duty, and these would not allow him to pray for the success of the gospel as preached by any minister ordained on the footing of a presentation.

Had that gentleman lived in this country during any part of the first hundred years after the Reformation, it is to be doubted that the success of the gospel would have formed no subject for his prayers, as it is certain that, throughout the whole of that period, there was no other mode of settling ministers practised in this country. But, on sentiments so full of the most detestable species of bigotry, we will not descend to make any further remarks.

tenance to these ideas. We therefore received an extract of their minute, of which the following is an attested copy, and then retired.

Calton, Nov. 9, 1796.

" The presbytery entered upon the consideration of the affairs of the Glasgow congregation, as stated in the minute of last presbytery, the first article of which related to the persons who had heard a minister of the established church preach at a meeting of the missionary society of Glasgow. Several papers were read by the session to the presbytery, which they had not transmitted to them at last meeting. A long paper was also read to the court, subscribed by some of the persons who had heard that sermon, containing a defence of the missionary society, and of their own conduct in attending that sermon. The members of the court then gave their judgment at large, from which it appeared, that they were unanimous in an approbation of the object of the society, and that they meant to state no opposition to the society itself; but that there were *weighty reasons which prevented them from taking any active part in the business of it, either in attending their private or public meetings, or in joining with them in prayer or preaching, or in any other exercise wherein they acted officially.* The presbytery further adhere to their former sentence, and enjoin the persons concerned to take the matter, and what they have now heard, under their serious consideration.—Extracted by Archibald Mason, P. Clk."

Before proceeding further, let us pay some attention to this curiosity of a minute, which most certainly may be pronounced a perfect *unique* of its kind.

It states, that the presbytery unanimously approved of the object of the society; very well: and that they meant to state no opposition to the society itself; still better. What then follows? Why, surely, that the utmost liberty is allowed to every one, under their inspection, to give it that degree of support which they conceive to be their duty. No, no, reader, this is only your own way of reasoning; you seem to be so ignorant as to imagine, that if an object be lawful in itself, and the means used to promote it such as you either cannot, or will not oppose, that there can be no immorality in supporting it yourself, and still less in forbearing with such of your christian brethren as have freedom to do so. But all this arises from your not having been initiated in the mysterious and sublime doctrines of the Reformed Presbytery: By these you are taught to know, that an object may be very lawful in itself, and the means used to attain it such as are not to be opposed; and yet it may not only be improper to concur in the use of such means yourself, but sinful and offensive to hold communion with those who deem it to be their duty to do so. Yes, reader, by these doctrines you are given to understand, that you may prohibit a fellow Christian from becoming a member of a society, and discharge him from at-

tending their public and private meetings, or taking any active part in their busines, without indicating any disapprobation of the object of the society, or stating any thing in opposition to the society itself.

But we perceive that you are hesitating. Do you then suppose, that these sublime doctrines are too elevated for your shallow comprehension, or do you suspect that they tend to unhinge the foundations of all morality? But, stop, we believe you are in the communion of the Reformed Presbytery—Yes. Why then, we can tell you, from experience, that you must be very cautious how you express your doubts and difficulties, either as to the truth of their principles, or the propriety of their decisions. You say that you do not understand these doctrines; it perhaps would have been better if you had concealed this circumstance, for seeing that it arises from the weakness of your intellectual powers, it is proper to overlook it: but we hope that you are quite disposed to believe them. No. For what reason? Why, because we do not understand them. Strange, unaccountably strange! to hear you talk in such a manner. You surely must know that you neither understand the Monttherrick declaration, nor the manner in which the covenants were renewed at Crawford John, anno 1745. Why, to be sure I cannot understand these, for neither I, nor the one half of my brethren, ever saw the former, nor had an opportunity to peruse any account of the latter. You however must know that you have assented to their truth and propriety every time you have taken your seat at a communion table. Let me think a little—I really find that I have done so, for they are approved of in the Testimony, and an approbation of the Testimony is a term of communion; but then I assented to them on the authority of the Testimony, and I credited all those things in the testimony, which I never had an opportunity to examine, on the authority and good intentions of the presbytery. Why then may you not assent to the foregoing doctrines on the same principles? Be it so, that you neither understand nor believe them, it is sufficient for some people's purpose if you profess to believe them, and promise never to oppose them.

But it seems you also suspect, that these doctrines go to undermine the foundations of all morality. We must confess that we know not how to get decently rid of this objection, for the truth is, that on this subject we are nearly of your way of thinking. We cannot help being of opinion, that to allow our neighbour to perish with hunger, while we are able to supply his wants, is but another name for murder, even though we are able to affirm that we had no intention to kill him; and we really are afraid that the doctrine which teaches us to vindicate the omission of positive requirements, under the pretence that we do not mean to oppose them, contradicts the general scope of the law, and counteracts the benign spirit of the gospel.

Under the Mosaic dispensation it was expressly stated, that if a

man saw his neighbour's ox, or his ass, fall into a pit, he was not to imagine that he had fulfilled the obligations he was under to his brother, by saying, that he had neither put his property in danger, nor meant to oppose the deliverance thereof: No, he was in any ways to aid his brother, in rescuing his property from every impending danger. To transcribe those passages in the New Testament, which corroborate, illustrate, and enforce these salutary regulations of the Old, is altogether unnecessary, as they must be fresh in the memories of all our readers; suffice it therefore to observe, that our Saviour himself hath put this matter beyond the reach of all reasonable contradiction, by representing the final condemnation of the impenitently wicked as depending on the non-performance of allowed duties.

Let us then attend to the sayings of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness: I was a stranger, and ye thrust and kept me out. No: But I was a stranger and ye took me not in: I was in prison, and ye were they who imprisoned me and opposed my relief. No: But I was in prison and ye visited me not.

We do not find that in this affecting representation of that awful display of the holiness and justice of God, that these self-condemned creatures presume to vindicate themselves, by saying, Lord, we never meant to oppose those who ministered unto thee, we never meant to oppose any one from visiting thee. No: Such refuges of lies are too thin to be depended on, even by the sons of despair; they have recourse to one vastly more plausible—Lord, when saw we thee hungry, a stranger, and naked? &c. But how instructive is the reply—in as much as ye *did it not* to these my brethren ye did it not to me.

But the presbytery had several weighty reasons for discharging all their connexions from giving any support to that society which they meant not to oppose. But why have we not been favoured with a view of these weighty reasons? Are we to blame for rejecting a deed which is evidently everlast of our rights, as men, and our privileges, as Christians, when it comes invested with no other authority than the mere assertion of its enactors, that they had weighty reasons for its enactment? Now, where are these weighty reasons to be found? We must say, that we have never heard a single one assigned in support of these deeds which had the smallest claim to the appellation of weighty. But as we may be supposed partial judges in this case, let these reasons be unfolded to the world; let the christian public have an opportunity to judge of their weight: for the truth is, that until these reasons are produced, mankind will be tempted to suspect that they are quite analogous to those which induced the Priest and Levite to pass by the poor man who had fallen among thieves, leaving him to derive the benefits of christian sympathy from the hands of a despised Samaritan.

But, rev. Sirs, did you really mean no opposition to the society

itself, when one of your number, who had deemed it his duty to attend its meeting, and who had actually done so for some time, found it requisite, in opposition to his own sentiments, to withdraw from it? Do you actually mean no opposition to the society, when you not only abstain from praying for and countenancing it yourselves, but when you will not dispense christian privileges to such of your people as have the fullest conviction that it is their duty to support it?

The minute tells us, that you unanimously approve of the object of the society, and mean to state no opposition to the society itself; but where would it have been to-day if all the denominations in the country had acted towards it as you have done? Why, it most assuredly would have been dissolved. Now, in this case, something very strange would have happened—here is a society, towards the ruin of which every one has contributed; and yet every person approves of its object, and no one can be found who meant to state any opposition against itself.

But again, let us suppose that the ruling powers of this country were to issue a proclamation, declaring that they approved the object of your association, and meant to state no opposition to your society itself; but, at the same time, they had several weighty reasons, which induced them to discharge all, under their authority, from taking any active part in your business, either in attending your public or private meetings, or in joining with you in prayer, or preaching, or in any other exercise wherein you acted officially. Now, rev. Sirs, whether would you be most disposed to pity the weakness, or detest the wickedness of those who could insult your understandings, by telling you, that the one part of such a proclamation was perfectly consistent with the other?

We can see a variety of other topics by which the absurdity of this decision might be illustrated; but we go on to mention, that having obtained a copy thereof, we, to the best of our recollection, at about two o'clock in the morning, retired to a room in the neighbourhood.

Our business now lay within a very narrow compass; we had either to comply with the foregoing decisions of the presbytery, or continue to remonstrate against them, or immediately to give in a formal declinature. That to have complied with these decisions would have been highly criminal, is a position of the truth of which we no more doubted than we doubted of our own existence; and the more we considered the dispositions and sentiments of the court, the more we were persuaded, that to persevere in remonstrating against their confirmed deed, was to serve no other purpose than to give unavailing trouble to them, and unprofitable anxiety to ourselves. We therefore deemed it a duty which we owed to ourselves, and to the cause in which, under Providence, we had been embarked, to draw up and give in a formal declinature.

Accordingly one of our number, at our desire, and in our presence, drew up the declinature, of which the following is an extract; which, having been unanimously approved of, was read, and delivered by one of our number to the presbytery; upon which we received an extract of their minute and retired.

Calton, Nov. 9, 1796.

“ Whereas we, the subscribers, have been, by a deed of the Reformed Presbytery, which met at Douglas in August last, found chargeable with sinful and offensive conduct in attending the missionary sermon, which was delivered at Glasgow in April last; against which deed we have this day found it to be our duty to remonstrate, which remonstrance the rev. presbytery have found to be insufficient to induce them to modify or expunge said deed. We therefore now find ourselves obliged to turn our reasons of remonstrance into reasons of declinature; to which we have to add, their persevering to refuse to admit us to church privileges, unless we would comply with said unscriptural and tyrannical deed—and their refusing to take under their consideration their terms of communion, notwithstanding that we pledged ourselves to prove that they contain glaring inconsistencies: nor would they allow us to continue in communion with them, upon the footing of our assenting to these terms, as being nearer to the Word of God, as far as we can judge, than any other to which we have access. And we also think, that the conduct of the rev. presbytery is absolutely inconsistent in professing a regard to the object of the missionary society, and even to the society itself, while, at the same time, they have cast us out of church communion, who had attended the missionary sermon, and have this evening found, that none of their members can be allowed to attend the private or public meetings of the society, nor join with them in prayer or preaching, nor give them any pecuniary aid, or take any active part therein; all which considerations we deem to be sufficient grounds for declining your authority—and we hereby do decline your authority, take instruments, and crave extracts.

<i>Robert Williamson,</i> <i>William Auld, sen.</i> <i>John Wingate, jun.</i>	<i>John Euing,</i> <i>Peter Ferguson,</i> <i>William Rae.</i>
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The following is a copy of the minute which we received on giving in the above declinature:

Calton of Glasgow, Nov. 9, 1796.

“ The following persons, Robert Williamson, William Auld, John Wingate, jun. John Euing, Peter Ferguson, and William Rae, having returned (m) with a copy of the foregoing

(m) It is proper to mention, that William Waddel is considerably advanced in years, and was therefore unable to continue with us after we had first retired from before the court, he consequently was not present when the declinature was drawn up; he however fully approves of it, and nothing but the want of opportunity prevented him from signing it.

" minute respecting their cause, to deliberate upon it, returned to
 " the presbytery, and gave into the court a formal declinature of
 " their authority on account of the decision expressed therein, took
 " instruments and craved extracts; in which papers they kept out
 " part of the presbytery's deed, and inserted an article as a reason
 " of it, which the presbytery did not at all determine.

" Extracted by *Archibald Mason, P. Clk.*"

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to bestow some attention on that part of this minute which blames us for keeping out part of the Presbytery's deed, and narrating an article as a ground of declinature on which they did not at all determine. Were we conscious that this part of our declinature had been improperly arranged, an apology might be found in the situation in which we were placed when it was composed. We had attended at the bar of the presbytery for the space of eight hours, at least; and that under circumstances which were no less calculated to exhaust the mind than to fatigue the body: and indeed we are sensible that, partly owing to these circumstances, it has not been drawn up with that accuracy and perspicuity which the importance of the subject demanded; but when we have made this concession, we know of no other we ought to make. It is indeed true that we have not engrossed the whole of their minute into our paper; but, by what law, or by what precedent, were we obliged to do so? It is to be remembered, that the presbytery's deed at Douglas, by which they had pronounced our conduct to have been sinful and offensive, &c. &c. was the chief, and indeed of itself, a sufficient ground for declining their authority, especially when they had confirmed it at the meeting holden in Calton. On these grounds we turned all our reasons of remonstrance into reasons of declinature; and these we considered to be so complete in themselves as to vindicate the step we were about to take, independent of every other consideration. However, when the decision lay before us, we deemed it proper to point out and testify against all those parts of it which seemed to be most erroneous, tyrannical, or inconsistent, omitting such things as seemed less important or more obscure. It is true, that if the parts omitted had been calculated to do away the bad qualities which attached to the passages testified against, their omission must have been highly culpable, especially if the world had no other opportunity of knowing that such qualifying circumstances had an existence; but, in our apprehension, neither of these things can be said respecting the case before us. We cannot see, that the passage omitted extenuates, in the smallest degree, the bad qualities of the parts quoted. The presbytery have not specified the passage which they blame us for omitting; but, we otherwise know, that they had the following sentence in their eye—" or in any other exercise in which they acted officially." Now, if the reader will

be kind enough to turn up the minute from which these words are taken, he will easily perceive, that they neither extenuate nor explain any thing which had been previously said: nay, to us, they appear to be deeply perplexed and obscure. To whom does the pronoun *they* refer? By consulting the passage it will be found, that it relates to the members of the Glasgow missionary society. Now, if the association itself be lawful, it surely is not easy to see how it can be sinful to occupy an office therein; and if it be lawful to occupy an office therein, it is hard to say that it is sinful to join with the office-bearers thereof when acting officially. On the other hand, if the institution itself be unlawful, it is a mere waste of words to tell us, that it is sinful to bear office therein, or unlawful to join with such as do so in those exercises in which they act officially.

But it is further to be noticed, that the presbytery could sustain no injury by our forbearing to constitute either this or any other part of their decision as a ground of declinature, because we either meant to publish the whole process, or we did not; if we did, then the world had a complete view of their minute, and could judge whether we had omitted any part of their decision, calculated to modify or extenuate the passages deemed most erroneous, &c. If we did not intend publication, their minute book and our extracts would still have born an equally strong, though less public testimony to the same points. It is also to be remarked, that as they could sustain no injury by such an omission on the one hand, so we could derive no possible advantage from it on the other: on this account, we deem it to have been no less peevish in the presbytery to engross this circumstance in their minute with so much formality, than it is perhaps useless for us to spend so much time in vindicating our conduct. We therefore declare, that if we had that declinature to draw up at present, we, in order to cut off all pretence for such silly and useless caviling, would have no objection to engross the whole minute verbatim into it.

But this is not all—we are also charged with narrating an article as a reason of declinature, on which the presbytery did not at all determine. Were this statement correct, we would plead guilty at once, and openly ask forgiveness from God and man for our offence; but we must say, that this part of the minute seems to be the mere language of passion, and conveys an idea which approaches very near to an absolute falsehood; the truth is, that when we requested the presbytery to say, whether on our abstaining from the missionary sermons we might otherwise countenance and support the society by word and deed. We certainly meant, that these deeds included the giving pecuniary aid to that institution; however, the clerk drew up the first scroll of the minute in such a manner as gave us an express allowance to support the society's funds. It at the same time was perfectly evident to us, that in drawing up the

minute in this form, he had actually gone in opposition to the opinion of the majority of the court; but whatever be in this, nothing can be more certain, than that this clause was objected to, and, in our opinion, justly, as being inconsistent with the other parts of their deed, and accordingly it was *expunged* from the minute, in the face of the whole court. Now, is it true, that this was no determination at all; if so, we must conclude, that some people's words and actions have no meaning: but if these things are equivalent to any determination at all, then this part of the accusation is founded on a real falsehood.

While we wish to repel every unfounded accusation with becoming firmness, we, at the same time, are desirous to make the most open and sincere acknowledgment of every mistake and informality which attaches to our actions, and that, whether they have been perceived and objected against us by our opponents or not. To err is the lot of humanity; but, stubbornly to vindicate wrong, is a sure indication of a perverted understanding or depraved heart. Actuated by such sentiments, we have to confess, that besides those latent imperfections, which have more or less blended themselves with our motives and actions, in conducting this business, there is one informality imputable to us, and that of such an obvious kind as to require some apology.

It is a maxim very generally received, that such persons as have been found censurable by an ecclesiastical court, have no right to insist for a redress of real or pretended grievances at the bar of that court, until they submit to those censures, which are the appointed means of re-admitting offenders to the communion of the church. We have it then to acknowledge, that we stand chargeable with having violated this maxim, in as much as in the latter part of our representation, &c. &c. we took the liberty to enumerate and crave the removal of certain improprieties and errors from the terms of communion, established and enforced by the Reformed Presbyterian.

It perhaps will appear rather paradoxical to attempt to extenuate or remove the impropriety of this part of our conduct by adding, that it was done with the coolest deliberation, and under a persuasion, that we were then about to act inconsistent with the established forms of judicial procedure.

Those persons, who deem precedent and usage too sacred to bend to considerations of general expediency, or who imagine, that such rules admit of no exception, will scarcely deign to hear an apology for this part of our conduct; while those who suppose, that even these rules admit of exceptions, and who believe that those persons act the wisest part who, while they venerate the rule, are, at the same time, careful to mark the exceptions, will be disposed to hear with attention, while we endeavour to evince that we had general expediency to urge against precedent and established usage;

and that, in our situation, to observe the exception than comply with the rule.

We therefore proceed to mention, that some time previous to the commencement of this prosecution, the greater part of our number had imbibed an idea, that it was our incumbent duty to exert ourselves in bringing that mass of indigested, unimportant, and intolerant * matter, which forms a considerable part of the terms of communion established by the reformed presbytery, under the review of that rev. body.

But, before any suitable opportunity had occurred for effecting our purpose, the missionary business intervened. In considering what influence this affair was likely to have on our design, we easily saw that the probability was great, that unless we stated our sentiments concerning these terms, in some one part or another of those papers which related to the missionary business, we would never enjoy another opportunity.

Under this idea, we strongly suspected that our remonstrance would be among the last papers we ever would be allowed to present to the reformed presbytery. We therefore deemed it to be our incumbent duty to embrace this opportunity to bear an open and public testimony, at their own bar, against those evils which pervade their system, and thereby partly atone to the christian world for the improper part we had acted, in so long submitting to their terms of communion ; we, at the same time, persuaded ourselves, that though this application might have no immediate effect, yet, out of its ashes another might arise, which would operate with more energy, and have a more successful issue ; and indeed this part of our intention has already, in a great measure, been happily realized. Since our expulsion from that body, others have stept into our shoes, and are now acquiring immortal honour, by promoting those salutary improvements in the religious system of the Reformed Presbytery, which we so ardently desired to effect. And it is pleasing to relate, that such is the power of evidence, and the force of truth, when clearly stated and firmly supported, as to produce impressions on the most prejudiced minds ; hence, those very persons, who seemed to shudder at the idea of altering their terms of communion in Nov. 1796, have, in Nov. 1797, agreed to transmit a proposal, for reforming their Reformed Code, to all the members of presbytery residing in this country.

Such then were our leading motives for introducing these discussions into our remonstrance, and such are the pleasing effects which have resulted from, or, at least, have followed that measure. To those, who deem these reasons insufficient to vindicate that part of our conduct, we candidly declare, that we have none stronger to urge, and must therefore submit to their disapprobation :

* See Appendix, No. 4.

we may however tell them, that though we engrossed these requests into our remonstrance, we by no means intended to insist for their discussion, until once the Presbytery and we had accommodated our unhappy differences relative to the missionary society; and it is remarkable, that the presbytery themselves took up the discussion thereof in part, without ever adverting to the informality of its having been introduced by persons whom they had previously subjected to censure; all their aversion was directed against the idea of altering their terms; but, notwithstanding their eagerness to criminate our conduct, no one of them suggested a single hint tending to shew that we had no right to ask a redress of grievances. All their reasonings were intended to prove, that there were no grievances to redress; and so much was this the opinion of some members, that at least one of them declared, that he never would consent to alter these terms.

Having thus gone over the leading steps of this prosecution, we would now take an affectionate, and, perhaps, a final farewell of our readers; and in doing so, we will be permitted to say, in our own behalf, that we have endeavoured to avoid laying before them any fact or opinion which can tend to render them less useful, less agreeable, or less comfortable, whether considered as men, or as Christians; but we must add, that we have aimed at something still more valuable than the negative merit of having done no injury: we have uniformly aimed at bringing forward such facts and sentiments as are calculated to inspire and nourish love to God, and to the souls of men. Whether we have, in any suitable degree, conducted ourselves in such a manner as to promote, under the blessing of heaven, these salutary purposes, it belongs to others to decide.

A considerable time hath now elapsed since the leading ideas, contained in these sheets, were committing to writing, we have therefore had an opportunity to think attentively and seriously on their evidence and tendency, and the more we have examined them the more have we been convinced, that they form a part of that cause, which, sooner or later, shall prevail over all opposition.

Entertaining these sentiments, we cannot but bewail the conduct of those who seem determined to oppose such salutary institutions as have lately been formed in this country, with a view to spread knowledge and religion over heathen lands, as well as those who give no countenance to such laudable associations, as have for their object, the promoting religious knowledge among the rising generation in our own country. In our apprehension, mere neutrality in these matters is very improper, and real opposition highly criminal. Were such opposition or neutrality manifested only by the thoughtless, the inconsiderate, the immoral, or the profane, a consideration of their general character would enable us to account

for this particular part of their conduct ; but when the professed and real people of God are found to act such a part, their conduct can only be accounted for by having recourse to the power of habit and the mighty influence which casual associations have over the human heart.

One association of this kind we may take the liberty to mention : The far greater part of those professors of religion, who have either opposed, or remained unconcerned spectators of the late pleasing movements, to diffuse religious knowledge abroad and at home, have long been accustomed to believe, that whatever they deem true, should not only be believed, professed, and practised by themselves, but also enforced on others as a term of communion ; consequently, that no association, having religion either for its basis or object, can be formed by those who belong to different religious denominations.

When we consider the education which such persons have received, it would be extremely unjustifiable to blame them severely for having imbibed such notions ; but we know not how their retaining them, amid all the light which has lately been thrown on this subject, can be vindicated.

It certainly forms a strong presumption against these opinions, that they stand in direct opposition to those laudable and salutary institutions, which have the promoting of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the salvation of precious and immortal souls for their object ; and this presumption ought most assuredly to lead out every one, who names the name of Jesus, to examine the foundations on which any opinion rests which leads out to such pernicious effects ; and we can say, for our own part, that it was by a process of this kind that we arrived at a thorough conviction, that these sentiments were not more practically pernicious than theoretically false. But as we mean to state our sentiments on this subject, at some length, in the Appendix, we shall conclude this part of the work, by recommending to all those who love the appearance and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give their utmost support to those institutions which have been formed in this country to train up a seed to do service to our Emmanuel at home, and to convey his saving name and glorious gospel to those dark places of the earth, which have long been full of the habitations of horrid cruelty. The wheels of divine Providence are now so high as to be dreadful ; let us rejoice, however, that the Spirit of the living creature is in the wheels ; and when he is shaking all nations, let us hope, that the Desire of all nations is about to come, and fill the house of his visible church with glory. As we therefore would wish to be found of him in peace at his coming, let us endeavour to study the voice of Providence, and avoid opposing his designs, by supporting those remains of the leaven of antichrist, which, perhaps, is more or less blended with our most favourite systems, lest we partake of that

destruction, which will be accomplished by the pouring out of the vials of divine wrath upon the man of sin, and all his abettors.

Mean-while, let all the genuine and avowed friends of religion be careful to avoid two extremes, that of supposing, that gloom, fullessness, and austerity constitute any part of the christian character on the one hand, or that the gospel of the blessed Jesus gives any countenance to a wide and relaxed morality on the other. Happy should we deem ourselves if we could suppose, that the perusal of these sheets shall induce any to connect regularity of manners and purity of morals with liberality of sentiment, and generosity and benevolence towards men with piety towards God. In order that this may be the case, condescend, O Lord, we beseech thee, to accept in the Beloved this small mite, thrown into thy treasury with a view to promote in our humble sphere, and, we trust, at the call of thy Providence, the cause and interest of our divine Emmanuel: May it be attended with thy blessing, in so far as it is conformable to thy holy will; if it contains any particles of error, do thou be pleased to correct their pernicious tendency by thy providence, and prevent our unworthiness and its real imperfections from blasting its general tendency and real design. ‘ Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, may thy kingdom come,’ and ‘ from the rising to the setting sun may incense be offered to thee, and a pure offering—May ‘ men not only be blessed in our Redeemer,’ but hasten the time when ‘ all nations shall call him blessed.’

Now, to the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise God, and to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and to the seven Spirits which are before the throne, be ascribed, blessing and honour, and glory and power, for ever and ever—Amen.

APPENDIX, No. I.

PERHAPS few phrases are more vague and ambiguous than those of *occasional* and *promiscuous* hearing ; it seems that, according to the vocabulary of the Reformed Presbytery, they are no less applicable to those who, in a single instance, have attended an evangelical minister, when delivering a sermon on a week day to a missionary society, than to those who leave their own Calvinistic pastor to hear a Baxterian on one Sabbath-day, an Arminian on another, and a Socinian on the third ; for surely, to characterise even this conduct with the epithets sinful and offensive, and to expel those from the communion of the church who are chargeable with it, is nearly to discharge against it all those weapons with which the church is furnished.

To describe two modes of acting, which are so widely different, by the same terms, seems to be a strong evidence of the poverty and ambiguity of language, and of the dexterity with which even bigotry and party spirit can avail themselves of this circumstance, to promote their own gloomy and pernicious purposes. The truth is, that the phrase *occasional hearing* is generally used in such a loose and inaccurate manner, that it may be justified by one person and condemned by another, while, at bottom, their sentiments are nearly, if not not altogether the same ; aware of the undefined state of this phrase, we never could give an unqualified assent to it on the one hand, nor an unlimited disapprobation on the other.

That mode of *occasional hearing* for which we have been prosecuted, we conceive to be not only innocent, but laudable and praiseworthy ; whereas we most unequivocally disapprove the conduct of those who give their attendance as readily to a known Socinian, Arian, or Arminian, as to one who preaches Christ and him crucified.

Besides, much respect is due to order, consistency, and edification, all of which may, or must be injured, were those who have voluntarily incorporated with a particular body, and who have submitted in the Lord to a certain minister, to consider themselves as under no higher obligations to give a regular attendance on the dispensation of public ordinances in that society to which they belong, than on those which are administered in other congregations, even though they should belong to the same denomination. To attend regularly in that particular congregation to which they belong seems to be a binding rule, the exceptions to which are far from being numerous. Some attention must also be paid by individuals, even to those rules of a society which they do not fully ap-

prove, so long, as, on the whole, they deem it to be their duty to continue with, or are allowed to remain in that connexion. During the time we stood connected with the Reformed Presbytery, we therefore frequently denied ourselves the full exercise of our christian liberty: this was so much the case, that prior to our attendance on the missionary sermon, that church had it never in her power to find us faulty in the article of occasional hearing; not that we either approved or believed that passage in the Testimony, which, after the enumeration of a variety of bad qualities, meant evidently to be applied to one or other, or all of the presbyterian denominations in this country, proceeds to condemn "all active " owning and countenancing of such, by attending on any of their " corrupt official ministrations, or receiving any ordinances from " such, to whom the *Lord has denied his blessing*"—a passage, which, for illiberality of sentiment, and boldness of assertion, has not been surpassed by any thing which the Roman Conclave ever fancioned.

But however much we might dislike this part of the principle on which their opposition to the hearing of the ministers of any other denomination is founded, yet, from such considerations as we have already mentioned, we gave no offence in this particular; and had it not been for the warm attachment we had to the missionary scheme, we, in all probability, had given none to this day.

But the fact is, we conceived this institution to be so clearly deducible from the principles, and so congenial to the spirit of our holy religion, that we deemed it much safer to try the other existing systems of human composure, by their conformity to the principles, spirit, and tendency of this institution, than to condemn or discountenance it, in compliance with the letter or spirit of any received system.

That some parts of the letter of that Testimony which we had embraced looked with a suspicious eye towards the missionary scheme was not to be doubted; but as no such institution had an existence at the time it was composed, we were certain that nothing contained therein could be immediately directed against that institution; and to us it seemed highly reasonable, that the letter of such passages as seemed adverse to this undertaking should be explained in the most liberal and generous manner; in which case, we flattered ourselves, that there was little or nothing therein which might not be reconciled to missionary ideas; at the same time, we were clearly of opinion, that whatever passages could not be accommodated thereto ought to be expunged.

It is now however beyond a doubt, that those whom we would naturally expect to have the most thorough knowledge of this system are disposed to view it in a very different light, and rather than sanction, or permit such an explanation, seem determined to expel all those from their communion who act under the idea, that their

system either is or should be reconcileable to the principles of the missionary association.

In consequence of our excision from that body, we have found ourselves under no other restraints, with regard to occasional hearing (n), than what must ever arise from the authority of that declaration, ' My son, cease to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the ways of knowledge.' But a question here naturally occurs, What are the qualities of that instruction which is here described as causing to err from the ways of knowledge, and when is it that we are to cease from hearing a particular minister, because his teaching comes under this description ?

According to some men's explanation of this passage, we ought to withdraw from, or avoid the ministerial teaching of every man whose sentiments differ from our own in the slightest degree.

With regard to this opinion it is material to remark, that it seems founded on a series of propositions, the greater part of which being strictly true, it is thereby rendered more difficult to detect those fallacious sentiments, which are either designedly or accidentally interwoven therewith.

The following may be considered as the premises from which the opinion alluded to is meant to be deduced, and no one will be disposed to call their truth in question. Every proposition which can be conceived is either true or false. The man who believes any one proposition to be true, which I deem to be false, I necessarily must consider as under the influence of, at least, one error. But the Scriptures enjoin me, to cease from hearing the instruction which causeth to err ; I therefore can hear no man who does not think exactly as I do on every subject, or who, in any given case, teaches that to be true which I conceive to be false.

With regard to this mode of reasoning, it is to be observed, that the fallacy thereof does not hinge on the principles from which the conclusion is professedly drawn, but in supposing, that whatever is said in Scripture, with relation to the phrase instruction which causeth to err, is applicable to the slightest difference in judgment, and the most minute contrariety of opinion. To state the fair result of such an explanation seems equivalent to the most laboured confutation ; for we may boldly aver, that on the footing of that mode of reasoning by which it is supported, no one man on earth could lawfully hear the gospel preached by another, as it is perfectly notorious, that no two men have hitherto been heard of, whose sentiments, on every subject, were exactly the same ; and if we once allow, that we may hear a minister who holds one proposition to be true which we deem to be false, the principle which supposes the necessity of an absolute uniformity of opinion to con-

(n) This was written before any one of our number had received church privileges from, or connected themselves with any other denomination.

stitute lawful hearing is for ever abandoned ; and the question, thence forward, assumes a new form, and must be thus stated : What are those truths which a minister must be known to teach, in order that persons, in our present situation, may lawfully attend his ministerial teaching, notwithstanding our being aware that he holds sentiments to which we cannot accede ?

Without presuming to determine for others, we have the utmost freedom in announcing our own opinion, which is, that persons, in our situation, may lawfully hear every minister occasionally, who is known to preach those doctrines, which are usually distinguished by the terms calvinistic or evangelical, let their other sentiments be what they may ; and we know of no other line of distinction equally clear, expressive and scriptural.

There are indeed two propositions which the presbytery seem to have taken for granted, which certainly have no apparent claim to the character of self-evident truths. The one is, that occasional hearing of every kind and degree is a moral evil. The other, that to hear a minister preach, necessarily implies an approbation of all the evils which are blended with the constitution and administration of that denomination to which he belongs. As we know of no foundation for these propositions, either in Scripture or the nature of things, they can have no influence on our conduct ; and until we can perceive them substantiated by suitable evidence, we are disposed to give them our most decided negative.

Such are our present sentiments on the subject of occasional hearing, and in so far as any of our former opinions, or conduct, will not correspond with the sentiments here stated, we openly renounce them ; and we hope, that we shall ever continue disposed to abandon any of those opinions, we now entertain, the moment we perceive them to be founded in error.

It is material to remark, that the sentiments of the Reformed Presbytery, on this subject, are in express opposition to the practice of the most eminent of our reformers. When the Scotch commissioners, who had been appointed to conduct the treaty of Rippon, in 1640, were on their way to London (to which place the treaty had been transferred), “ They rested at Ware, where the minister being well recommended,” they “ heard him preach two good sermons.” After they “ were warned of the ending of the service”—“ which we notice (says Stevenson) to shew what notion they had of occasional conformity at that time *.”

We cannot forbear mentioning some of those presbyterian ministers who gave this countenance to an episcopalian preacher—Mr. Robert Blair, Mr. Robert Bailie, Mr. George Gillespie, Mr. Henderson, &c. &c.

Before dismissing this subject entirely, we may take the liberty

* See Stevenson, vol. iii. page 491.

to remark, that we have never heard a passage of Scripture quoted on this subject by the ministers of the Reformed Presbytery but what was grossly misapplied; all of them either related to that distance at which the Jews were to stand from the idolatrous nations around them under the Mosaic ritual, or to that conduct which the disciples of Jesus were to observe towards their heathen neighbours under the New Testament dispensation. How absurd then must it be to take such passages of Scripture, and apply them to those distinctions which obtain among evangelical ministers in this country; and yet we believe that this false mode of reasoning has served more completely to fill their people's minds with a dread of occasional hearing, than any other method they possibly could have devised: nay, we ourselves have the copy of a paper in our custody, which was presented to the session, complaining of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper having been dispensed in Calton on the same day with the other denominations in town, in which the complainers compare the ministers of the other presbyterian denominations with—‘ The worshippers of Baal.’

From the sentiments here delivered, it is easy to perceive, that we could not have complied with that decision of session, which was held out to us by that court in lieu of the presbytery's deed, unless they had explained occasional and promiscuous hearing in such a manner as would not have included our attendance on the missionary sermon in that description; but it is obvious to remark, that they could not explain it in such a manner without counteracting not only the spirit but the very letter of the presbytery's deed. We have therefore reason to think, that though we had otherwise been satisfied with the manner in which their proposal was brought forward, yet they and we, without some gross artifice, or base equivocation, could not have agreed in our explanation of that species of occasional and promiscuous hearing which is really sinful and offensive.

APPENDIX, No. II.

WHEN an ecclesiastical court interposes judicially, in order either to condemn or authorise any publication, it forms a presumption that such a publication is of that importance as materially to affect the interests of truth, virtue, and piety.

If such interference tends to sanction the doctrines and recommend the precepts of any writing, those who deem the former erroneous and the latter pernicious, cannot fail to take the alarm; and they will naturally feel disposed to adopt such measures as seem best calculated to prove an antidote not only against the tendency of such a writing, considered merely in itself, but also to counteract the influence of that celebrity it may have acquired, by having received the approbation and support of ecclesiastical authority.

On the other hand, if such interference has terminated in a judicial disapprobation or condemnation of any production, it becomes the indispensable duty of those who conceive its doctrines to be true, and their tendency important, to exert all their energy to support them in the face of every opposer,

But in all such cases, it is more especially incumbent on the members of that court, which has thus interfered, to judge for themselves, and neither to lend their aid in support of what is false and pernicious on the one hand, nor exert their influence to crush that which is just and salutary on the other.

These reflections have been suggested by those complaints and decisions to which a publication, entitled "An Address to the Christian People under the Inspection of the Reformed Presbytery, concerning the more frequent Dispensing of the Lord's Supper, by one of themselves," has lately been subjected. The first complaint formally preferred against this publication was conceived in the following terms :

" We find there are among you, of that frenzy notion, who " would abolish appendages, but we are not of that opinion."— This complaint, which we have copied verbatim from one of the most curious papers that perhaps was ever presented to a church court, was subscribed by two persons, who were at that time liable to church censures (o); notwithstanding which the session took

(o) It may however be an act of justice to the subscribers of this paper to mention the fault for which they were open to church censure—it was on account of their non observance of a Fast-day immediately before the dispensation of the Lord's Supper at Calton.

Let us however hear their own reasons for this part of their conduct; the following then are copied verbatim from the paper mentioned in the text:

" But these are our reasons for not keeping your Fast day: The first is, Because

advantage of their complaint to take judicial cognizance of said pamphlet. Their minute on that occasion runs thus:

Calton, Feb. 29, 1796.

“ James and Stewart Murray gave into session a paper of grievances—among other of these grievances they complained of the countenance given by some members of session to a pamphlet, entitled *An Address. &c.* by one of themselves. After a considerable time spent in conversation with said persons, on this and other grievances, the session agreed, that at their next general meeting the members should have a general and free conversation concerning said pamphlet, so as to understand one another's minds anent the general tendency of it.”

Let us now attend to what passed at the next meeting of session:

Calton, April 11, 1796.

“ In agreeableness to the above resolution, the session entered upon some consideration of said pamphlet, and which was continued for some length of time; at last the majority of the session were of opinion, that the session should have no further conversation or concern, in a judicial way, with said pamphlet. Against said decision the following members, viz. Daniel Cars, Robert Meikle, James Rankin, and Archibald Park dissented, and craved that this their dissent might be marked in the minutes; and that they might have liberty, along with any other members who might accede to their dissent, to give in their reasons of dissent at some subsequent meeting.”

It may not be improper to mention, that these reasons of dissent never were presented—a circumstance which we sincerely regret, as they undoubtedly would have exhibited sentiments and dispositions not frequently to be met with.

The friends of a free, rational, and well-regulated discussion, had certainly some reason to congratulate one another on the honour which the session had acquired by this honourable and manly decision; but, alas! they allowed their laurels to fade ere they were well fixed on their brow.

We have formerly noticed, that the first paper given in against

we see it conformity; for this is clear by the way the agitators behaved, by enforcing the sacrament upon the congregation by impudence, imposition, and *logical reasoning*. When the sacrament was first in the Calton, you took your example from the town, by changing the Fast-day on account of the Lords' coming in; is not this a proof of conformity? Had we any thing to do with the Judges? And it is surely a proof of conformity being so keen offering to the Lord what cost you nought. Also we remember, in the application of a sermon, which was, “ You conform too much to those around you, who in other ways you esteem little;” neither do we find that the prophet Elijah symbolized to the worshippers of Baal: we find no preparation by the prophet till Baal's prophets had ended, &c. &c.”

Such were the men who first brought a formal complaint against the above pamphlet, and these persons are neither connected with deluded Mahometans, idolatrous Papists, nor blinded Pagans, but, previous to the offence here stated, were in full communion with the Reformed Presbytery.

us, on account of the missionary business, contained a severe attack on said pamphlet, and, with much acrimony of language, denounced one of our number as the author thereof; upon which the session, notwithstanding their former decision, resumed the judicial discussion of this publication, and actually subjected it to a deed of judicial disapprobation.

It is therefore proper that we now give a view of this complaint, in so far as it relates to the Address itself; but, for the reasons formerly mentioned, we shall entirely overlook whatever is personal, with regard to the individual whom they *supposed* to be the author thereof; that part of their paper runs thus:

“ That some time in the year 1795, an anonymous pamphlet
 “ made its appearance amongst us, entitled *An Address, &c. &c.*
 “ in said Address, the addresser, in the height of his zeal for the
 “ good of the church with which he is connected, doubtless such
 “ sentiments tempted him to set forth four penny worth of his own
 “ and others conceptions—wherein he assumes the dictatorial air,
 “ seizes the cathedra, and sets up for a demagogue, and instructor;
 “ and instead of pleading with his mother, as he pretends to do,
 “ in the frontispiece of his pamphlet (allowing for once all to be
 “ just, he says), he falls to work evidently for the purpose of ex-
 “ posing his mother, the church, and of laying open her supposed
 “ nakedness to the eye of the world, and that without ever making
 “ the smallest application to the church representative for the re-
 “ dress of his supposed grievances, which justly may be deemed an
 “ opening a door for schism and *sects*, Psalms 50 and 20; and
 “ without taking notice of *any particular contained in said pamph-let*, at the time we take it upon us to say, that the whole of its
 “ manner, and spirit, and tendency, is calculated to promote a di-
 “ vision and rent in the church and congregation, of which we are
 “ a part, and a contempt of all church government and good order,
 “ which is essential to the well-being of any society whatever:
 “ wherefore we cannot but be grieved on account of such an in-
 “ cendiary libel upon the church to which we belong.”

Without detaining ourselves with making a single remark on the spirit or language of this paper, we proceed to give a view of the decision of session respecting it.

But here we find ourselves at some loss how to proceed: Immediately after the meeting of session, the member who dissented from their decision waited on the session clerk, and obtained a copy of the minute in so far as this business was concerned; this extract he still has in his possession, in the hand-writing of the clerk, ready to be produced whenever demanded.

It however so happens, that it by no means corresponds to the extract of the same minute which the clerk has transmitted to us, along with the other extracts; and in order to shew the difference, we shall copy them both verbatim.

The one first given runs thus:

May 30th.

" The general session met—
" a paper of grievances was gi-
" ven in, consisting of three par-
" ticulars—Against a pamphlet,
" concerning the frequency of
" the dispensation of the Lord's
" Supper. On the missionary
" business—On those who ab-
" sented their attendance of Mr.
" Fairly's ministry. *On all the*
" *particulars the session greatly*
" *disapproved*; but, at the re-
" quest of the commissioners,
" the whole is referred, simpli-
" citer, to the Presbytery, to
" meet at Douglas in August
" next."

The one last received is as follows:

Calton, May 30, 1796.

" At this meeting the cor-
" "respondence at Badhill, Sand-
" "hills, Gartloch, Camlachie,
" "gave in a petition or paper of
" "grievances, consisting of three
" "general heads. The first was
" "concerning the above pamph-
" "let, and, in pretty general
" "terms, charging a member of
" "session of being the author, or,
" "at least art and part therein.
" "Concerning the pamphlet, the
" "session, by a great majority, a-
" "greed, that *neither formerly*,
" "nor now, did they approve of
" "the general tendency of said
" "pamphlet; but, on account of
" "the near approach of the dis-
" "pensation of the Lord's Supper
" "at Sandhills, and the diffe-
" "rence in opinion of a few of
" "the members of session, the
" "session were of opinion that,
" "for the present, there should
" "be a kind of mutual forbear-
" "ance until the said occasion
" "was over, and, at the same
" "time, recommend to all the
" "members of the congregation
" "to study a conscientious pre-
" "paration for said ordinance,
" "and not to absent themselves
" "from attending, on all the days
" "of said solemnity, so far as
" "circumstances will allow."

We can perceive several remarks to be naturally suggested by the extract of the minute last received; but we shall only detain our readers with observing, that it represents the decision of session in a much milder view than the other extract, or than the fact will support; we therefore have no hesitation in saying, that the first extract corresponds entirely to the spirit of the session's deed, but the latter does not.

What motive the session, or the clerk, or both, have had for that alteration of the record we know not. One would hope, that they

had felt a sensation of shame, on account of their disapproving a pamphlet, of which they had never read a single sentence, judicially, and therefore wished to vail this absurd decision, by saying, not that they "greatly disapproved of it," but that "neither for "merly, nor now, did they approve of the general tendency of "said pamphlet."

But if this conjecture be ill founded, we wish to see a satisfying explanation of this part of their conduct. Mean-while, we have to remind our readers, that the following reasons of dissent are drawn up against that deed as expressed in the first extract, combined with the strongest charges of the complainers, whose mistaken zeal, and intemperate language, the session's deed had evidently recognised.

These reasons of dissent are as follow :

Reasons of Dissent from a Determination of the Reformed Session of Glasgow and Sandhills, which met at Calton, May 30, 1796, in so far as said Deed disapproved of a Publication, entitled An Address, &c.

" 1. Because I am fully satisfied, that the dictates of true wisdom and sound policy, and, perhaps, of civil and religious liberty, were overlooked in commencing a judicial enquiry into said publication ; and therefore these sacred principles must have been still more deeply injured, when such investigation terminated in its being subjected to a formal deed of disapprobation. That every publication is amenable at the bar of manly, impartial, and generous criticism is certain ; and that, at that bar, this publication ought, in some respects, to plead guilty, I am not inclined to dispute ; that the sentiments which it contains are not uniformly expressed, in the most unexceptionable manner, and that some sentences might have been entirely omitted, without materially injuring the main design, are positions against which I feel no inclination to contend ; and from the opinion of those, who urge the unpleasant altercation it has occasioned, as a proof that it would have been better to have addressed it to Christians in general, than to the members of our church in particular, I am, upon the whole, not much disposed to dissent. But when the amount of these faults, or improprieties are collected, they seem to constitute the sum total of its criminality ; and be it so, that we either may, or must consider them as indications of weakness or indiscretion, and therefore, as such, must stand condemned at the bar of enlightened criticism ; yet, they indisputably belong to that species of delinquency, for the trial and condemnation of which no other human tribunal has, in any free country, been hitherto erected.

" 2. Because I cannot join in a deed which judicially disapproves of any publication, unless the record in which such disapprobation is contained do specify those erroneous sentiments, or unjustifiable personalities on which such a judicial disapprobation is founded,

being convinced, that an inflexible adherence to this principle is not more necessary, in point of form, than in order to prevent those allowed truths, &c. which may be interspersed throughout any such writing from being indiscriminately subjected to the same condemnation with those parts that are of an opposite description.

“ 3. Because the session, in their vote of censure, either supposed that the scope and tendency of said publication corresponds with its avowed object, or they did not; if they did, then I cannot acquiesce in their decision, in as much as they have thereby judicially disapproved what I humbly conceive to be indeed an imperfect, but, at the same time, a most laudable and well-meant attempt to recommend the more constant discharge of an important duty, and the more frequent enjoyment of a most exalted privilege, by announcing the duty, and pointing out the utility of a more frequent administration of the Lord’s Supper.

“ 4. Neither can I accede to their decision, if they supposed that the professed is not the real object thereof; because, after the most careful examination of its contents, I am decisively of opinion, that its real tendency accords so entirely with its avowed object, that it seems difficult to conceive how the members of any court, who had read it with attention, and without prejudice, could deem themselves authorised to say, that the object, scope, and tendency thereof is to condemn week-day sermons, and excite divisions in the church. Respecting the former of these particulars, its doctrine is, that so long as public fasting and week-day sermons are merely considered as free-will offerings, without being deemed essentially requisite to the enjoyment of this ordinance, and so long as they can be obtained without diminishing that frequency, which the church should, and could enjoy, they are not merely innocent, but very desirable, and may be of real use: And again, it teaches, that so long as our church representative judges it inexpedient to abolish, or modify, the existing practice respecting week-day sermons, any member of our church would be highly reprehensible who did not attend them, if within the compass of his power, or who was otherwise disposed to treat them with contempt. Such are the sentiments with which the doctrine contained in said publication, respecting these days services, is qualified; and therefore, as thus qualified, it ought ever to be understood. Those who propose to carry their attachment to these appendages, beyond the boundaries here described, it is to be hoped, have satisfied their consciences how to answer the important interrogation—Who hath required these things at your hand? But as the subscriber remains wholly incapable to give any satisfying answer to such an enquiry, he will be permitted to say, that until such a time, as the doctrines contained in the foregoing passages are confuted by arguments of a

more convincing nature than can be afforded by the condemnatory sentence of any church court, he is determined to join in no decision which is founded on the supposition, that these doctrines are either false in themselves, or pernicious in their tendency.

“ 5. As little can I entertain the idea which rests the condemnation thereof upon the supposition, that it was either designed, or is of itself calculated to create disorder and produce anarchy in the church, because I have not been able to discover any doctrines therein contained, which can be *rationally* construed to have such a tendency. And unless this could be clearly and indisputably evinced, it seems absolutely illegal to urge any diversity of sentiment or collision of opinions, of which it may have been the innocent, or, perhaps, the meritorious occasion, as a proof, that it ought to be considered in itself as the unlawful efficient cause, either of such diversity of sentiment, or of that unpleasing altercation and animosity which may have incidentally sprung from it. Besides, this objection, if it proves any thing, proves too much; and therefore in this, and in every other similar case, must be considered as proving nothing. It is founded on the principle, that no sentiments should be published, which do not accord entirely with established usages, prevailing practices, and generally received opinions—a doctrine which seems deduced from inadequate premises, and which unquestionably leads to the most absurd conclusions. What is Christianity itself but a system, which attacked, modified, or over-turned all the established forms of religion which were on the face of the earth? What was our reformation but an open and avowed attack upon established systems, prevailing habits and opinions, which had been sanctioned by the lapse of ages. The yell of innovation was indeed sounded by the minions of antichrist in the one case, and by the bigotted Jew and prejudiced Gentile in the other; but we find, in both cases, that while the friends of religion and truth exercised the most ardent compassion and warm benevolence towards the persons of those infatuated and mistaken zealots, they heard their senseless and unmeaning clamour with that steady contempt, which true wisdom and virtue will ever consider as the only return to which it is entitled. Our Saviour himself clearly foresaw, and plainly foretold, that those disorders which resulted from pharisaical pride and obstinacy on the one hand, and the senseless and unmeaning prejudices of the multitude on the other, were to be attributed to him and his genuine followers; he accordingly assured them, that though his doctrines and cause were of themselves of the most salutary and benevolent nature, announcing peace on earth, and good-will towards men, yet the pride, the prejudices, and the ignorance of those to whom they were addressed would pervert them into occasions of offence, division, animosity, and discord. Think not, said the divine Jesus, that I came to send peace on earth, but

a fire, and what if it be already kindled? And full soon was the certainty of these declarations experienced by his followers. Those who have turned the world upside down are come hither also, was the complaint summarily preferred against them by those very men whose understandings they were endeavouring to enlighten, and whose best interests they wished to promote.

“ 6. Because the session ought not to have given any decision upon a subject which was not regularly before them; for, however erroneous the publication might be in itself, or however pernicious in its tendency, it seems everlast of the first principles of judicial procedure, to condemn, or disapprove of any writing, with the nature and tendency of which they, *judicially*, were totally unacquainted: For, granting that a certain pamphlet's having been stated as a cause of offence, by any number of persons under their inspection, might be a cause sufficient to authorise them in instituting an enquiry into the justness of the alledged grounds of offence, yet, even in this case, I humbly conceive, that it was incumbent on the court to have required the complainers to specify the particular passage, or passages, which they deemed opposite to the Word of God, to our standards and Testimony; and if such persons had failed to do so, then the complaint, in so far as they were concerned, ought, most assuredly, to have been dismissed as frivolous and vexatious. If a specific statement of faulty passages had been produced, it was indispensably necessary to have judged the parts selected, either in their detached form, or to have read over the pamphlet with deliberation and candour, from beginning to end. If the specified passages were found to be so grossly erroneous, or so palpably pernicious as to render it presumable, that there could be nothing either going before, or following after, sufficient to qualify their erroneous import, or do away their pernicious tendency, the merely ascertaining the nature of such detached passages might perhaps have been sufficient to authorise a deed of disapprobation; but, in every other case which the subscriber can conceive, the public and complete recital of the whole pamphlet, or at least of those parts which encircled the passages complained of, was, in the eye of justice, candour, and judicial order, of indispensable obligation; notwithstanding of which it stands engrossed in the session's record, that they did, and hereby do disapprove of the general tendency of said publication, although the people aggrieved had specified *no one* error, nor pointed to *any one* passage in which the doctrine of our standards, supreme or subordinate, had been either departed from or opposed, but satisfied themselves with bringing forward a general and vague complaint of, what they were pleased to term, its hurtful and pernicious tendency, and although the members of session themselves had never read a single sentence thereof in their *judicial* capacity: Nay, what I presume will not be easily paralleled in the history of judicial discussion, one

member, at least, prefaced his condemnatory vote, by assuring the court, That he had never read it in public or private.

" JOHN WINGATE, jun."

These reasons were adhered to by JOHN EUING.

We shall conclude this part of our subject by remarking, that the presbytery which met at Douglas in August, 1796, authorised the session to lead a proof, in order to substantiate the charge which the complainers had brought against one of our number, as having been the writer of the pamphlet under consideration. Whether the presbytery meant that this proof was to be taken, without previously serving the supposed author with a libel, is more than we can *positively* determine; though we strongly suspect that they really meant to leap over this formality. However, as no libel was ever presented, and as no proof was ever led, we are left utterly in the dark as to the real grounds of that hostility which the rev. presbytery carried on against this publication.

APPENDIX, No. III.

RESPECTING TERMS OF COMMUNION.

IT is perfectly obvious that there are two extremes, into one or other of which we are apt to go when establishing terms of communion. On the one hand we may omit those truths, the clearness and practical importance of which give sufficient evidence, that they are essentially necessary to constitute the christian character, and, on the other, we may elevate such things as the Spirit of God has pointed out to us as matters of forbearance and doubtful disputation, into the same place with the most indisputable and important doctrines of the gospel.

As all extremes ought to be avoided, it would be altogether improper to detain ourselves by endeavouring to determine which of these are most pernicious; we may however take the liberty to remark, that a propensity to multiply terms of communion, beyond what the Scriptures exemplify, or the purposes of edification will allow, has more or less prevailed in most protestant churches.

It is indeed true, that though this propensity had no influence during the apostolic age, yet it made its appearance at a very early period, and seems to have been associated with every system and train of thinking, which tended to make the throne a foundation for the altar, and to establish uniformity of opinion as the basis of church fellowship.

Though the genuine principles of the Reformation had a direct tendency to correct, or eradicate this propensity, yet a variety of adverse circumstances concurred to prevent these principles from producing their full and proper effect.

At that important period the powers of the mind, which had long been enfeebled by disuse, and kept in bondage by authority, were suddenly released, and powerfully stimulated to action. These circumstances however were attended with one infelicity—they were more calculated to rouse and animate than to regulate and direct the latent energies of mankind; hence their exertions, in too many instances, were more remarkable for boldness and singularity, than for that patient attention, and cool discrimination, which is so necessary to enable us to distinguish, with accuracy, between the sound and the corrupted parts of a complex system; hence it frequently happened, that when the men of that age were abandoning the errors of Popery, they, at the same time, renounced such important truths as had more or less been associated with it in every period of its history.

It will readily occur, that men who were neither inclined, nor qualified to discriminate truth from error in the system they had rejected, were not well fitted for substituting a rational, consistent, and scriptural system in its place; we accordingly find, that at the era of the Reformation a most luxuriant crop of tares grew up among the good grain, which furnished the enemies of that glorious work with a pretence for insinuating, that the only fruits which could be produced, in a state of separation from the church of Rome, were the fruits of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah.

The truth is, that those errors and irregularities, of which the Reformation had been the occasion, (not the cause) were industriously and maliciously ascribed to all who had imbibed the sentiments of what was termed, "the Lutheran heresy;" hence the origin of *modern* confessions, articles of faith, testimonies, &c. Their primary design was to exhibit to the world, but especially to the members of the Romish church, that the disciples of Luther, Zuinglius, &c. &c. had neither embraced the sentiments, nor were chargeable with the irregularities and licentiousness which characterised and disgraced the followers of a Muncer, a Cnipperdoling, and a John of Leyden.

If the statement here given be accurate, it must be admitted, that the circumstances which first suggested the propriety of modern creeds, articles of faith, and confessions, gave no countenance to the idea of imposing them as terms of ministerial, far less of christian communion; and, perhaps, had it not been for the very pernicious tendency of some of those opinions, which they were intended to condemn, they had not been formed into terms of church fellowship to this very day. But as some of these tenets went to overthrow the peculiar doctrines of our holy religion, and others to sap the foundations of all morality, our reformers were led out to entertain the opinion, that the same creed which served to distinguish them from such persons, in the view of the world, would also be proper for determining who were and who were not worthy of being admitted into their society.

All this was very well, and had these confessions, articles of faith, &c. been sufficiently concise, and, had they, at the same time, contained no doctrines but those, the practical belief and profession of which is essentially requisite to constitute the christian character, they not only *might*, but *ought* to have been made terms of communion; and if they never had been enforced as such, they might have contained every idea which their framers deemed to be either expressly stated, or really deducible from the holy Scriptures.

It is not to be denied, that our fathers, in a variety of instances, acted as if they judged this distinction altogether unfounded; but it may be justly doubted whether, in this instance, we can safely infer what were their real sentiments from their practice; for if the view which we have taken of this subject be proper, con-

feßions, articles of faith, &c. were not composed with a design to be made terms of communion, but to serve a very different purpose. We therefore cannot certainly infer from their contents, what doctrines their composers deemed essentially requisite to form a basis for church fellowship.

But did not our reformers impose them as terms of ministerial and Christian communion soon after they were introduced? There is room to think that at least some of them did so; but as they were not originally intended for this purpose, they are not unlike a building which is erected for one use and then employed to another; they have always given evidence, by the inconveniences and disadvantages which continually result from them, that they are employed to a purpose for which they are neither suited nor were originally intended. The truth is, that by a singular combination of circumstances, those truths, the evidences of which are less easily discerned, while they themselves are of inferior importance happened to be intimately blended, by a human arrangement, in the same system with the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; and, in consequence of this association, and the peculiar circumstances in which it happened, were equally formed into terms of ministerial and christian communion.

These observations seem to throw some light on the origin of that propensity to multiply terms of communion, which forms such a prominent feature in the character of some presbyterian denominations of our own day, but in none more conspicuously than in that body from which we have been lately cut off (p).

(p) Perhaps no one denomination of Christians, either in this, or in any other country, have ever shewn a more ardent propensity to multiply terms of communion than the Reformed Presbytery. If any one is disposed to question the justness of this remark, we beg leave to refer him to the following general view of these terms; they comprise,

	Pages.
1. The National Covenant, which, in our common octavo editions, occupies	10
2. Old Scots Confession, sworn to, in all its parts, in the National Covenant,	20
3. First Book of Discipline,	9
4. Second Book of Discipline,	21
5. Solemn League and Covenant,	3
6. Confession of Faith,	47
7. Larger Catechism,	57
8. Shorter Do.	15
9. Form of Presbyterial Church Government,	15
10. Directory for Public Worship,	27
11. Testimony, the third edition of which occupies	216
12. The Acknowledgment of Sins, and Engagement to Duties, at the renewing of the Covenants at Auchenlaugh, anno 1712,	74
	508

Now, it is submitted to every one acquainted with the subject, whether it will not be proceeding on the most moderate principles to suppose that these passages, taken one with another, contain six distinct propositions each, at which calculation the amount will stand thus,

508
6
—
3048

The moment that our reformers required an assent to any one truth as a term of communion, the belief and profession of which is not necessary to constitute the christian character, that moment they elevated that truth to a place which it never occupied in the apostolic or primitive ages of the church.

It will be allowed, that no man ought to profess any thing in religion beyond what he believes, and no man can believe any proposition of which he has never seen the evidence; but, where is the person to be met with in common life, and among the labouring part of the community, who has received such an education, or is possessed of that leisure which is necessary to enable him to assent in truth, judgment, and righteousness, to 3048 propositions? We, at present, are saying nothing either as to their truth or falsehood, but we are contending, that it is unscriptural, unreasonable, and absurd, to establish such a number of propositions as a term of church fellowship.

But it has been said, that the Bible contains a greater number of propositions, and yet we allow it to be made a term of communion. Now, who sees not the lameness of this comparison? That assent which we give to the holy Scripture is resolvable into one proposition, namely, That we believe it to be the Word of God, and consequently, must believe all that it contains to be true, whether we understand the real import thereof or not; but the composers of every human system are fallible, and we can believe nothing rightly, if we credit it merely on their authority: we must perceive the evidence which supports their sentiments before we can rightly entertain them; and though we should find them advancing the truth in ninety-nine instances, yet, that affords no certain evidence, that they are right in the hundredth.

But you have frequently assented to these terms, you must therefore have acted very improperly in so doing. To this charge we must plead guilty, and now deem it to be our incumbent duty to do so openly before God and man.

We, at the same time, would take the liberty partly to explain the mode of thinking by which we reconciled our conduct to our own minds, during the period we were in connexion with the Reformed Presbytery: We satisfied ourselves with supposing, that they, on the whole, were nearer to the Word of God than any other to which we had access, and were, in the main, agreeable thereto.

But a circumstance which occurred (we think in the year 1795), cured us of this mistake. It has long been the custom of the ministers belonging to the Reformed Presbytery to read out and explain these terms, on the Saturday's evening immediately preceding the day on which the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is dispensed; and it is understood that intended communicants are to receive tokens of admission only on the footing of acceding to these terms, as thus explained; it however sometimes happens, that these explanations are not only different, but in direct opposition to one another: accordingly, on the Saturday's evening before the dispensation of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper in Calton, the minister who presided at that solemnity told us in effect, that we were called to assent to these terms only in as far as they were agreeable to the Word of God; however, the senior pastor of that congregation, when exhorting a table on the following day, told the communicants, that to suppose that they had assented to these terms, only in as far as they were agreeable to the Word of God, was only to mock God and deceive themselves: and the same doctrine was taught from the pulpit, by another minister, on the Monday following.

Seeing therefore that divines were thus differing, we thought it could not be improper to examine this matter a little more closely for ourselves, and in doing so we had only to consider, whether our giving an assent to these terms only in as far as they are agreeable to the Word of God does or does not comply with the designs of that court by whom they were enjoined, the intentions of those by whom they were composed, or originally formed into terms of communion, and with their own obvious scope and genuine tendency. We are free to say, that when we had contemplated the matter in this light, we found ourselves obliged to adopt the opinion of those who had told us, that these terms could only be assented to by those persons who believed that every idea which they contained was agreeable to and founded on the Word of God.

This seemed to bring the matter at once to a short and decisive issue, for you either

Now, this single step in their conduct is to be viewed in a two-fold light, with regard to posterity—1. They thereby set an improper example before their children. 2d. They established a precedent which seems to say, that their genuine followers are not only entitled, but *obliged* to establish every proposition, which they believe to be founded in Scripture, as a term of communion.

But notwithstanding the faults and imperfections which attached to this part of their conduct, yet there are certain principles in human nature which will prepare us to expect, that it was to have a powerful and extensive influence on the minds of their children.

It is ever presented to our view, intimately associated not only with all the firmness, magnanimity, disinterestedness, and piety, which so strongly marked their character, but also with those important and glorious truths, for all of which they so nobly contended.

Hence the origin of that passive and indiscriminate veneration, which even the well disposed among us are too ready to entertain for whatever has been sanctioned by the doctrines, or recommended by the example of our venerable ancestors.

Too many persons are still to be found among us who suppose, that to find fault with the practice, or to reject any of the opinions entertained by our ancestors, is a sure indication of enmity to the important cause in which they were embarked. Such persons are but little disposed to distinguish between what our fathers acquiesced in, from the force of their peculiar situation, and what they adopted from choice; or between what they entertained from ignorance and mistake, and what they embraced from conviction, and believed on the most solid grounds: hence such persons, in com-

can give an unqualified assent to every idea which these terms contain, or you cannot; if you can, (in so far as consistency is concerned) all is very well, but if you cannot, you must then either endeavour to get them simplified, and brought to that form to which you can assent in truth, judgment, and righteousness, or seek ease to your consciences, by retiring from the communion of the church: for so long as these terms, in their own obvious tendency, and in the evident intention of those by whom they have been formed into terms of communion, require an unqualified assent to whatever they contain, as agreeable to and founded on the Word of God, it is opening a wide door for quibble, duplicity, and prevarication to suppose, that any individual has a right to shape them in a suitableness to his own private sentiments, or mould them according to the humours or opinions of others; and then say, that these are the terms of communion established by the Reformed Presbytery.

Under the influence of such considerations, we felt it to be our duty to embrace the first favourable opportunity to submit our sentiments on this subject to the consideration of the presbytery; but, before any such opportunity had occurred, the missionary business intervened, which the presbytery managed in such a manner as put a speedy termination to all opportunities of this kind. Whether their severe deed at Douglas, in August 1796, was in any degree influenced by an apprehension that we had such a design in contemplation, we leave to the Judge of all the earth to determine, as we by no means wish to impute to an improper and unavowed motive, a deed which, in our opinion, few motives could render more culpable, and none can justify.

mon with all servile and unenlightened imitators, will be apt to copy the blemishes of our ancestors along with their beauties, and their greatest faults along with their most valuable endowments.

Such seems to have been some of the circumstances which led out our fathers to extend their terms of communion beyond those boundaries, within which they had ever been confined, during the primitive ages of christianity, and such seems to be the source of those propensities by which their practice has been perpetuated, and is, at this day, supported.

But if from the original of this practice we turn our attention to its genuine tendency and real effects, we shall find that, as it naturally issued in forming uniformity of opinion as the basis of christian communion; so, wherever this idea hath been thoroughly imbibed and interwoven with established systems, it hath not only defeated its own purpose, but been productive of the most disagreeable effects. Disagreeable effects, do you say! Yes, we say disagreeable effects: nay, we may say mischievous, pernicious, and destructive effects; and happy would it have been for our fathers, and happy would it still be for ourselves, that this representation were only the result of a heated imagination; but, alas! it is the cool language of truth, the evidences thereof "are too ready and "too numerous; they are to be found" in those divisions, animosities and fierce disputes, which have wasted the vigour, impaired the comfort, and tainted the beauty of the church of the living God. They are to be met with in that bigotry and party spirit, which prompts the professors of religion to sacrifice the general interests of christianity at the shrine of their local peculiarities; but, above all, they are to be found in that alienation of affection, sullen reserve, and bitterness of spirit, which the real disciples of Jesus too frequently manifest towards one another.

To form accurate conceptions concerning the nature and cause of any disease, is justly regarded as no inconsiderable step towards a remedy: and may we not suppose, that if the practice of multiplying terms of communion; beyond what is enjoined by the precepts, authorised by the doctrines, or warranted by the examples recorded in Scripture, be the source of such numerous and heavy calamities, then the cure of these disorders is only to be found by reverting to the good old paths in which the apostles, and other believers, during the primitive ages, have trodden, they had all attained to the practical belief of those doctrines, on which justification by the grace, and sanctification by the Spirit of the divine Jesus, depend; and whereunto they had thus attained, they are exhorted by an inspired apostle, 'to walk by the same rule, to mind the same things,' under the pleasing hope, that wherein they were otherwise minded, God, in due time, would reveal even that unto them, in so far as they imbibed the Spirit, and regulated their conduct by these injunctions, 'they were all of one spirit, and of one mind, striv-

ing together for the faith of the gospel,' and 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' on the footing of those glorious truths, in which they were all agreed, they forbore one another in love concerning those topics on which they differed; their terms of communion corresponded 'to that simplicity which is in Christ.' They who were weak in the faith were admitted to the privileges of the church, without being pestered by doubtful disputations; and on these principles 'the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved.' Hence we find the great apostle of the Gentiles stating it as a powerful, perhaps an unanswerable argument, why a weak brother should be received into the fellowship of the church, because 'Christ had received him.'

One would be apt to imagine, that there is a simplicity, justness, and propriety, in these sentiments of the apostolic age (to say nothing of their divine authority), sufficient to recommend them to every Christian; and in this light they undoubtedly would appear to us all, were it not that we have been so long accustomed to contemplate them through the medium of those prepossessions and prejudices, which are the result of our having been educated in, and attached to, an imperfect, a complicated, and, in some respects, an erroneous system. But the prejudices arising from these sources are so inveterate, in some persons, as to render them wholly incapable either to discern their evidence, or relish their tendency. Eager to discredit what they are determined not to approve, they brand such sentiments with the character of dangerous novelties, and those who support them are represented as bold and audacious innovators.

It might tend to accuracy of thinking on this subject, if such persons would be pleased to compare any idea which they conceive to be new, not with what passed in Scotland during the seventeenth century, but with what was said or done in Judea, &c. during the first; for if any sentiment or measure is sanctioned by the doctrines or examples recorded in Scripture, they have an undoubted claim to all the respect which is due to the most genuine antiquity, however novel they may appear to those who deem every thing to be novelty which they cannot find recorded in the history of the Reformation period. "The very command, to look and to ask for the old paths, " (says Dr. Campbell) implies, that it may happen that the old " paths are deserted, consequently untrodden, and known com- " paratively to very few. In that case it is manifest, that the per- " son who would recommend them, runs the risk of being treated " as an innovator; this charge therefore, of affecting novelty, though " very common, must be, of all accusations, the most equivocal. " since, in certain circumstances, nothing can more expose a man " to it than an inflexible adherence to antiquity *."

As the view we have taken of the prevailing sentiments of the

* See the Preface to Dr. Campbell's Version of the four Gospels.

apostolic age, with regard to terms of communion, seems to suggest ideas of great practical importance, we are happy to find that the able, learned, and judicious critic just quoted, has been led into the same train of thinking with ourselves on this subject.

" It cannot be denied, (says he, when speaking of the apostolic age, &c.) that a certain unanimity, or a declared assent to the great articles of the christian profession, was necessary in every one, in order to his being admitted to, and kept in the communion of the church; but then, it must be allowed, on the other hand, that those articles were at that time few, simple, and perspicuous. It is one of the many unhappy consequences of the disputes that have arisen in the church, and of the manner in which they have been managed, that such terms of communion have since been multiplied in every part of the christian world, and not a little perplexed with metaphysical subtleties and scholastic quibbles. Certain it is, however, that several phrases, used by the apostles in relation to this subject, commonly understood to mean unanimity in opinion, denominate more properly coinciding in affection and concurring in love.

" Further, (says he) let it be observed, that in matters whereby the essentials of the faith are not affected, much greater indulgence to diversity of opinion was given in those pure and primitive times than has been allowed since, when the externals, or form of religion, came to be raised on the ruins of the essentials; or the power and a supposed correctness of judgment, made of greater account than purity of heart. In the apostolic age, which may be styled the reign of charity, their mutual forbearance, in regard to such differences, was at once an evidence and an exercise of this divine principle." " Him that is weak in the faith (says our apostle) receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations"—" For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs"—" Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth"—" One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike." As to these disputable points—" Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" and as far as he himself is concerned, act according to his persuasion. But he does not permit even him who is in the right to disturb his brother's peace by such unimportant enquiries—" Hast thou faith," says he, the knowledge and conviction of the truth on the point in question, ' have it to thyself before God"—" Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." And in another place—" Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you"—" Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." We are

to remember, that as ‘ the kingdom of God is not meat and drink,’ so neither is it logical acuteness in distinction, nor grammatical accuracy of expression, ‘ but it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,’—‘ For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.’

Such then are the sentiments by which we were influenced to adopt the general principle, that no proposition ought to be made a term of christian communion which evangelical Christians, of common capacity, in the due use of ordinary means, are incapable to perceive a foundation for in the Word of God.

In opposition to the doctrine here laid down, we are told, that there can be no communion without union, for two cannot walk together except they are agreed. But the question still recurs, what is the nature and extent of that union which is necessary to form a basis for christian communion? We assuredly ought not to consider an absolute and unlimited uniformity of opinion as necessary for that purpose; for if this were the case, we might aver, that christian communion from this day forward must be banished from the face of the earth; for where are two men to be found, whose sentiments on every religious topic are the same: nay, where is there a man, habituated to reflexion, (and the testimony of any other deserves no regard) who can point out any one year within his remembrance, in the course of which his sentiments, on one topic or another, have undergone no alteration?

If we then must abandon the idea, which supposes that an absolute uniformity of opinion is necessary to constitute that unity which is the basis of christian communion, we must satisfy ourselves with one which is limited. What then are those truths, in the practical belief and joint profession of which this limited unity consists? Why, it seems evident, that they are those truths, and those only, the practical belief and profession of which is essentially necessary to constitute the christian character; for as it is the foundation of christian communion into which we are now enquiring, when we have once found out those truths, the practical belief and profession of which is common to all Christians, we most assuredly have obtained all that is necessary to constitute christian unity; and when once we have ascertained what those truths are which constitute christian unity, we undoubtedly have discovered all that is or can be necessary to that communion, of which christian unity is the basis.

To us it appears, that this reasoning is absolutely conclusive, and we know of nothing that can be even plausibly urged against it, but what may be successfully obviated by adverting to the distinction between terms of christian, church, and ministerial communion. Let the phrase christian communion be considered as expressive of that real, intimate, and spiritual intercourse which all true believers have one with another: to the reality of this communion we

give our assent by acceding to that article in our creed—‘ I believe in the communion of saints.’ Now, in so far as this communion is spiritual and invisible, it depends solely on that vital union which subsists between Christ the head, and all the members of his mystical body ; in consequence of which, ‘ they have not only communion with the Father in his love, the Son in his merit, and the holy Spirit in all his saving operations, but also, by being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others graces.’

Now, when we consider, that it is the incumbent duty of all those who participate of the enjoyments arising from this real, but spiritual and invisible communion, to give a public evidence thereof, by openly maintaining a religious social intercourse one with another, it is evident, that the term or basis of this public religious fellowship, can be nothing else than the open profession of those truths, by the practical belief of which that real, spiritual, and invisible communion, which they maintain with their glorious Head, and with one another, as members of his body, is maintained ; or to use the very just and expressive language of our excellent confession on this subject, “ Saints by profession are bound “ to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of “ God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to “ their mutual edification ; which communion, as God offereth “ opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place “ call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.” Hence, it is evident, that the present missionary societies are a beautiful and edifying example of that christian communion which is so clearly taught in our Creed, and maintained in our Confession.

In order to determine in part the difference between christian, and what we would be disposed to term church communion, let us suppose that a certain number of persons, who make an open profession of those truths which we have already considered as essentially requisite to christian communion (it being always understood that their life and conversation is such as becometh the gospel of Christ), should voluntarily associate together, in order that they may, in a social capacity, observe and enjoy all the public parts of that divine worship which their Lord and Saviour hath instituted in his church. It is evident that somewhat more may be stated as a term of admission into this society than what is sufficient for christian communion ; at any rate, the terms thereof ought to be extended beyond those of christian communion, in proportion to the additional obligations and privileges which the nature and object of this new relation expressly announces, or necessarily implies ; the whole of which may perhaps be included in giving an acquiescence in, and submission to, that form of government and discipline which the society hath established.

It is however to be observed, that the person who acquiesces in

and submits to any particular form of church government and discipline, can only do so rationally, either because he is fully convinced, after the most accurate and impartial examination, that all the parts thereof are, exclusively of every other form, of divine institution, or because he believes, that on the one hand they contain nothing materially repugnant to the general rules of the Word, and on the other, that they are calculated to secure and perpetuate a competent measure of those advantages, which the Scriptures represent as the great end, for the attainment of which church government and discipline have been instituted.

It is quite obvious, that a person may have the utmost freedom to acquiesce in and submit to a particular form of government and discipline on the latter principle, who can by no means assent in truth, judgment, and righteousness, to any proposition in which their exclusive divine institution is either expressly stated, or clearly and necessarily implied; it therefore becomes a matter of some importance to consider, by what principle any body of christians are authorised to make an assent to the exclusive divine right of their particular form of government, &c. a term of church fellowship, more especially, when it is considered that an acquiescence in, and submission thereto, on the principles here laid down, seems adequate to all the purposes of social intercourse and christian edification.

To us it appears, that if the pernicious effects which have resulted, are resulting, and must still result from this practice, were properly attended to, they would be sufficient to deter any real friend to christianity from endeavouring to support it. The moment that it is established as a term of church fellowship, that every person must assent to the divine right of that form of government which the society has adopted, from that moment all those may be considered as excluded from the communion of the church, who are incapable to give this assent in truth, judgment and righteousness; but, perhaps, in the present state of christianity, ninety-nine Christians out of an hundred have not that knowledge of the subject which is requisite to their giving such an assent; consequently, all such persons, however dear to Christ, and desirous to promote his name, and cause, and honour in the world, must either be deprived of church privileges, or purchase them at the dreadful expence of downright prevarication, by assenting to the truth of a proposition which they either do not sufficiently understand, or fully believe, thereby sacrificing that integrity of character, on the maintaining of which their right to the enjoyment of these privileges, in the sight of God, essentially depends.

We frankly allow, that if such a practice can be shewn to have a foundation in the Scriptures, this reasoning, solid and convincing as it seems to be, must be abandoned; but it certainly would require very strong evidence to convince us, that any practice has a

foundation in Scripture, which inevitably tends to establish terms of communion which must either operate as snares to the conscience, or as instruments of christian separation, division, animosity, and discord. We are however free to say, that, after some attention to the subject, we have not been able to find the slightest foundation for such a practice in any part of the New Testament; and it must be allowed, that it is to that quarter, and to that only, that we must repair in order to ascertain what those truths are which ought to be established as terms of admission to the christian church; however, as it is possible that we may still be mistaken, we should take it kindly if those who think we certainly are so, would take the trouble of rectifying our mistake; we hope they shall find us disposed to abandon our error the moment they evince, that the practice of requiring an assent to the exclusive divine right of any one form of church government, as a term of communion, is either authorised by the doctrines, enjoined by the precepts, or recommended by the examples recorded in the sacred writings.

Would you not then make an assent to the exclusive divine right of Presbytery a term of church communion? We certainly would not; and indeed it is not very plain on what principle it has been made so by any body of Christians in this country. It is, or should be known, that though the following proposition—"That the Scripture holds forth, that many congregations may, and by divine institution ought to be under one presbyterial government," was, after a debate of thirty days, carried in the affirmative, by the Westminster assembly; yet, on this occasion, the parliament of England thought proper to exercise, by anticipation, that authority with which the same assembly soon afterwards invested the civil magistrate—"To provide, that whatever is transacted (in synods) be according to the mind of God." They accordingly expunged the words in this proposition "and by divine institution ought," because they had no wish to sanction the ideas which they are so eminently fitted to express, and substituted the more general and humble phrase—"That it is lawful and agreeable to the word of God, that the church be governed by congregational, classical, and synodical assemblies (q); and as thus altered by the parliament of

(q) Possibly some persons may be disposed to say, that they can perceive little or no difference between the proposition agreed to by the assembly, and that which was substituted for it by the parliament of England; we can only say, that the members of the assembly, both Scotch and English, entertained a very different opinion on this subject. "The disappointment of the Scotch commissioners and their friends, (says Neal) at the loss of this question, is not to be expressed; they alarmed the citizens with the danger of the church, and prevailed with the common council (of London) to petition the parliament, that the presbyterian discipline might be established as the discipline of Jesus Christ; but the commons answered with a frown, &c." It appears, from the same author, that the presbyterian ministers of London petitioned the commons to the same effect, but without success; they then petitioned the house of lords, and prevailed with the lord mayor and court of

England does this clause stand in our Standards at the present day. Now, will any one, adhering to these Standards, presume to say, that a proposition which was expunged from them, by what they themselves deem a competent power, must still be made a term of communion. We indeed know, that some men can say any thing which their humours, prejudices, and habits dictate; but we aver, that no man, adhering to these Standards, can say so, without setting consistency at defiance.

Although it by no means follows from any thing here advanced, that we must be considered as enemies to the divine right itself; yet it may be proper to observe, that we are so far from being so, that we are fully of opinion, that the presbyterian form of government, in its genuine spirit and tendency, has a better claim to that exalted honour than any other with which we are acquainted; but, at the same time, we do not suppose, that the evidences of this truth are of that simple, clear, and decisive nature, which must carry a conviction thereof to the mind of every Christian of common capacity, who wishes to assent to nothing in religion but what he can perceive to have a foundation in the Word of God; and therefore it ought by no means to be made a term of church fellowship.

The train of thinking here indulged would lead us out to say, that terms of ministerial communion ought to comprehend whatever is expressly stated, or necessarily implied in terms of christian and church communion, together with an open recognition of all those duties and obligations which are incumbent on the ministers of religion, in consequence of the peculiarly important place they occupy as teachers and governors in the christian church.

Such then seems to be the nature and limits of that unity which is essentially necessary to constitute a proper basis for christian communion, and such seems to be the principal modifications of which it is susceptible; from the whole of which, it indisputably follows, that wherever we have sufficient evidence that two or more persons believe in, and worship the one God, through the one Mediator, by the one Spirit, and have been made partakers of the one faith, the one baptism, and the one calling, there we find christian unity; and wherever we perceive christian unity, there we find a basis for christian communion; and wherever we find a society of such persons, formed on such principles, with that society we may in-

aldermen, to join with them in presenting an address, for the speedy settlement of church government according to the covenant; and that no toleration might be given to Popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, profaneness, or any thing contrary to sound doctrine; and that all private assemblies might be restrained. The lords thanked them for their zeal, and recommended it to the city magistrates to suppress all such unlawful assemblies; but the houses were not to be moved as yet by such disagreeable importunity. However, this laid the foundation of those jealousies and misunderstandings between the city and parliament which, in the end, proved the ruin of the presbyterian cause.—History, vol. ii. p. 193.

porate ourselves, provided they do not suspend our admission to the rights of membership, on our giving an assent to the truth of any proposition, which we either do not sufficiently understand, or fully believe; in this case we indeed must stand at a distance from such a body, however much we may approve and esteem them in other respects. But then, as they have obliged us either to do so, or prevaricate before God and man, they, and not we, are accountable for all the evil consequences which may result from the separation; for we are ever to remember, that no christian society has a right to establish any thing as a term of church communion, the operation of which must necessarily interrupt, impair, or destroy that religious intercourse and communion, which all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity are previously under the most solemn obligations to maintain.

The propriety of these observations will perhaps be more fully perceived, if we attend to the ease with which they enable us to reconcile and harmonise certain passages of Scripture, which on every other hypothesis seem to look towards one another with the most unfriendly aspect.

In what manner can those persons who contend, that the mere profession of christianity, or a general undefined assent to the Scriptures, as the word of God, is sufficient to entitle any man to the rights of church membership. Reconcile such an opinion with the following precepts and declarations: 'Be of one mind,'—' speak the same things'—' hold fast the form of sound words'—' whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rules, let us mind the same things, &c.' It is evident that the very letter of these passages is hostile to an unqualified and indiscriminate forbearance of every sentiment which may be held on religious topics among professed Christians; and therefore those, who, under the specious pretence of generosity, disinterestedness, and a love of peace, wish to extend their terms of communion to that degree which will enable them to comprehend all those who choose to adopt the christian name, must be considered as sacrificing, at the shrine of an ill regulated liberality of sentiment and delusive tranquility, all those evangelical truths, without the belief and profession of which an association of professed Christians can only be considered as a synagogue of Satan.

On the other hand, those persons who insist, that uniformity of opinion on religious subjects is necessary to church communion, evidently act a part not to be reconciled to the following injunctions: "Forbear one another in love,"—" receive him, (namely a weak brother) for Christ hath received him"—" he that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations, &c." To us it appears absolutely impossible for any man to yield obedience to these declarations, and, at the same time, act under the idea that uniformity of opinion is necessary to church communion; for

this uniformity is either attainable, or it is not; if it is, then all such injunctions are unnecessary; for it is surely superfluous to desire a man to bear with an infirmity which has no existence; if it is not, then to such persons these injunctions must appear not merely useless, but improper, in as much as they enjoin the exercise of certain dispositions, which a leading article of their Creed obliges them to restrain.

If these observations were to be followed out to their genuine consequences, they would enable us to draw some important conclusions with relation to the conduct of evangelical Presbyterians in this country, and perhaps would oblige us to carry home a charge of schism against several persons and parties who deem themselves the least liable to such an imputation.

If any denomination in this country, who holds the head Christ, and has embraced, and continues to profess, the unadulterated truths of his gospel, has at the same time established other propositions as terms of church fellowship, which in their operation must exclude those from their communion, who, in common with themselves, love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, we have no hesitation in saying, that such a party is chargeable with the guilt of schism; and, on the other hand, if there are two or more parties in this, or in any other country, who are agreed as to the belief and public profession, of all those truths which are requisite to constitute the christian character, and who impose nothing opposite thereto as a term of church fellowship, and yet continue to act separate from, and in opposition to one another, we do not see how they can be acquitted of the same charge: nay, when we consider, that the correction of evil is in effect to confer real good, and consequently, that it is as much our duty to purge our terms of communion of every redundancy, as to supply whatever defects the progress of knowledge may enable us to discover; it seems to follow, that unless we mutually engage in purging our terms of church fellowship of every ingredient which prevents all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity from giving a conjunct expression of their attachment to him, and to each other, by publicly recognizing their mutual love over the symbols of his broken body and shed blood, we must all be considered as more or less chargeable with schism (r).

(r) We are happy in having an opportunity to congratulate the public on the masterly manner in which the subject under consideration has been lately treated by the rev. Mr. Lawson, in his "Considerations on the Overture, &c." a production which seems much more calculated to confer honour on those by whom it is commended, than to receive additional celebrity from our humble praise.

We have the ambition to remark, that though the sentiments contained in these sheets were formed, and mostly committed to paper, previous to the publication of his excellent work, yet, in some instances, a striking coincidence of sentiment may be traced in the two performances.

In our apprehension Mr. Lawson has evinced, in the most satisfactory manner, that, in order to warrant the establishing of any proposition as a term of communion, it is not only necessary that it should be true, but also that it should be sufficiently impor-

The truth is, that if the doctrines which we have been endeavouring to establish be admitted, evangelical Presbyterians ought to think seriously of the speediest and most efficacious methods, by which they may all be united into one body. We are indeed fully aware of the difficulties which still interpose; but we do think, that they are rather of that kind which ought to quicken our diligence than to overwhelm us with despondency; and perhaps nothing would contribute more powerfully to forward such a desirable event, than to lay, entirely, or in a great measure, out of view the unhappy occasions of our separation, and commence our endeavours for a reconciliation by contemplating the number, and the vast importance of those truths, in the belief and profession of which we are all agreed—the many injunctions delivered to us as Christians, to bear with one another in love concerning those things about which we still differ—the numerous inconveniences to which we are equally exposed in our present divided state, and the certain advantages which would result to ourselves and to our holy religion from our acting in concert, when vindicating its claims and promot-

tant. We indeed sincerely lament that he has not endeavoured to exhibit a general principle, by which we might be enabled to distinguish between those truths which are, and those which are not, of sufficient importance, to be made terms of communion; we deem the attempt to be worthy of his genius, and can hardly reconcile our minds to the omission, even by considering the delicate situation in which he is unquestionably placed; for though we were to suppose that such an attempt had not been completely successful, yet it could not fail to produce some beneficial effects, as the mere display of such a rule, though somewhat imperfect, by affording a precise, steady, and interesting object to the mind, was likely to excite attention, and give rise to such discussions as might have ultimately issued, in the exhibition of one, to which no reasonable objection could be made.

At the same time it is to be observed, that the manner in which this respectable writer applies his reasonings, goes a great way towards establishing such a general rule; for it is not to be denied, that whatever truths are not of greater importance, than those which he deems unfit to be made terms of ministerial communion, ought, by no means, to be established as terms of *church fellowship*: For if it be supposeable, that men, who have been favoured with a liberal education, and have been employed for years in the acquisition of knowledge, may, after all, be unable to discern the evidence of certain truths in such a manner as to assent to them in truth, judgment, and righteousness; how absurd to imagine, that persons of a common education, in a great measure strangers to abstract reasoning, and the nature of evidence, and who are chiefly occupied in procuring accommodations for the body, or deeply engaged in the active scenes of life, should be capable to surmount obstacles, to the inveteracy of which, persons of the former description, are obliged to yield.

While we give our cordial tribute of applause to this truly amiable and masterly writer, whom we conceive to be entitled to the thanks of the christian public, we would also tender our most respectful homage to the other enlightened members of that body to which he belongs, who, in the face of much opposition, have exerted themselves in order to promote a reform in their terms of ministerial communion: And since we have gone thus far into the subject, we would take the liberty to add, that if they persevere in this good work, besides the other advantages that must result from it, they will wipe away a reproach which hath frequently been brought against ecclesiastical bodies—"that they never have been known to reform themselves;" and indeed we do not recollect an instance, in which such a laudable species of reform originated with the ministers of any denomination, and at the same time met with such a degree of opposition from a number of their people.

ing its interest, in opposition to all its enemies. These enemies are numerous and crafty, and they hate the genuine lovers and open professors of evangelical truth with a cruel hatred ; and, alas ! they are frequently found to be wiser in their generation than the children of light ; they seem to be fully aware of those advantages which arise from mutual co-operation, and much will they sacrifice in order to obtain it. Even Herod and Pontius Pilate can lay aside their private resentments, their rancorous jealousies, and their political antipathies, when they find it necessary to act in concert against the holy child Jesus. What a pity then, that the children of peace, for whom the Prince of Peace hath purchased peace with God, and with each other, by the blood of his cross, should be found biting and devouring one another about matters which, either by their own nature, or the special appointment of Jehovah, are of inferior importance in the system of divine truth, or perhaps have been less clearly revealed, in order that Christians might not only be furnished with an opportunity, but at the same time be induced to extend their charity and forbearance to others, because they stand perpetually in need of it themselves ? We say, what a pity is it, that evangelical Christians should be found biting and devouring each other about such matters, at the very time that their prompt persevering and malicious enemies are threatening to raze the foundation of all their hopes ; consider these locusts of the bottomless pit, ye children of the kingdom, who, though they have neither such a cause, nor such a bond of union, nor such a King as you have, yet they go forth in bands, while you are depriving yourselves of all the advantages of union, by acting on the very unreasonable idea, that the few particulars in which you differ ought to have more influence in separating you one from another than the numerous and glorious truths, in which you are all agreed, ought to have in uniting you together. Hence it is, that we appear before our common enemies, and to each other, as a people who are ‘ broken, and peeled, and snared, and taken ;’ but instead of criminating one another for the past, or of brooding over the present with littleness and despair, let us rejoice that amendment is yet in our power, and let us give evidence, that we know the value of this enjoyment, by improving it in the use of every suitable means, ‘ to provoke unto love and to good works,’ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as one body, but exerting ourselves the more earnestly to do so, because we see the day approaching, the day in which ‘ Ephraim shall no more vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim’—the day in which, as there is but one Shepherd, so there shall be but one sheepfold—the day, in which there shall be ‘ nothing to hurt or to destroy in God’s holy mountain ;’ for, in consequence of many ‘ having run to and fro, knowledge shall be increased,’ until it ‘ shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.’

But by establishing christian and church fellowship among evan-

gelical Presbyterians in particular, or Christians in general, on the basis of those truths in which they are all agreed, you would thereby relinquish, and forever abandon, all those concerning which they differ. We are very far from supposing this to be a fair deduction; it is indeed true, that we would relinquish them as terms of communion, but it by no means follows, that we would thereby relinquish them in any other respect whatever: Nay, there is reason to think, that as such an arrangement would prevent us from occasioning that irritation of mind, which even real Christians cannot help feeling, when obliged either to retire from the bosom of the church, or to prostitute their consciences, by assenting to certain propositions as true, of which they are either in doubt, or really disbelieve; it would be found more conducive to the propagation of such truths in the world, than if they were all at once to be established as terms of communion.

But as we are addressing ourselves to Protestants, it is material to remark, that the very principle, on which our claim to that honourable appellation wholly depends, necessarily involves the distinction which we are endeavouring to establish. It is admitted as a first principle, by all Protestants, that every thing necessary to salvation is so clearly revealed in one part of Scripture or another, that every man, in the due use of ordinary means, may attain the knowledge thereof (s). We cannot help thinking, that a very moderate degree of attention will enable every man to perceive, that this "great and leading" principle of Protestants necessarily presupposes, that the distinction between those truths which are, and those which are not necessary to salvation, is not only really and strongly marked, but also of great practical importance. Now, if we, as Protestants, and even as Presbyterians (t), can assent to the reality and utility of such a distinction, without endangering the honour, or impeding the progress of those truths, which we thereby confess to be less clearly revealed, and of inferior importance, how does it happen that we, by asserting, that *they therefore* ought not to be made terms of church communion, are chargeable with

(s) "The great and leading principle of the Lutheran church (says Dr. Mosheim) is, that the holy Scriptures is the only source from whence we are to draw our religious sentiments, whether they relate to faith or practice; and that these inspired writings are, in all matters that are *essential to salvation*, so plain, and so easy to be thoroughly understood, that their signification may be learned, without the aid of an expositor, by every person of common sense, who has a competent knowledge of the language in which they are composed."—See his Church History, vol. iv. p. 282. London, 1790.

(t) We have already seen, that the doctrine of Protestants expressly recognises this distinction; let us now see whether we have not openly admitted it as Presbyterians:— "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened, in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them."—Confession, chap. i. sec. 7.

advancing a maxim which has a tendency to diminish their influence, and obstruct their advancement in the world?

We have already seen, that if we do not distinguish between those truths which ought, and those which ought not to be made terms of communion, christian and church fellowship must be driven from the face of the earth. Seeing, therefore, that a line of distinction must be drawn in some one place or another, where can we fix it with so much propriety as in that place which we ourselves have acknowledged, both as Protestants and Presbyterians, to have been marked out by God himself? Has infinite wisdom been pleased to distinguish between those truths which are, and those which are not necessary to salvation, by revealing the former more clearly, and leaving the latter in greater obscurity; and shall we presume to guard against the inconveniences of such an arrangement, by putting them all on a level, in order that they may be equally enforced as terms of communion?

It is a strong confirmation of the truth of our doctrine, that it not only affords scope, but tends to awaken and animate the whole of those affections towards our brethren, which at once issue from, and are the strongest evidence of our love to God.

The contemplation of those truths, on the belief of which the preserved in Christ Jesus are all agreed, excites and enables them to exercise esteem, beneficence, complacency, and delight towards one another, while the consideration of those things in which they differ leads out to humility, patience, long suffering, meekness, and mutual forbearance.

Those glorious truths, by the practical belief of which they are all one in Christ, powerfully allure them to love one another with a pure heart fervently, while a sense of those shades of difference, by which they are all distinguished, calls aloud for the continual observance of the divine direction, to consider one another 'to provoke unto love and good works;' to bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the royal law of Christ.

The propriety of the preceding mode of reasoning is also strengthened by considering, that it places in a clear and steady light the nature of that distinction which takes place between those truths which ought, and those which ought not, to be enforced as terms of communion.

Considered in their general and common nature, they are all on a level; it being no less certain, that Paul circumcised Timothy than that Jesus Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Now, by a practical observation of the distinction which we contend for, this important *fact* is allowed to remain in all its force, in as much as the doctrine on which this distinction is founded confines it entirely to two particulars: it supposes those truths which ought not to be made terms of communion, to be either less clearly revealed, or to be by their own nature, or the special appointment of

infinite wisdom, of inferior importance ; and that they really are so is another *fact*, to which every Protestant and Presbyterian must assent. Now, when we perceive that this doctrine, in all its parts, corresponds so exactly to known and allowed facts, it must be confessed, that these facts completely establish the truth of this doctrine, while this doctrine fully illustrates the practical tendency of these facts. Be it so, that there is still some difficulty in fixing the precise boundaries between those truths which are, and those which are not necessary to salvation, and consequently between those which ought, and those which ought not to be made terms of communion. It ought to satisfy us that this distinction is more strongly marked, and therefore more obvious and easy to be ascertained than any other with which the christian world has hitherto been made acquainted. On this idea our fathers seem to have acted, when they adopted and defended this distinction against all the power and subtlety of the church of Rome, who wished to represent it as entangled with difficulties and involved in perplexity, in order that those who held it might be induced to escape from their embarrassment, by taking refuge in the arms of papal infallibility, and commit the difficult and painful task of examining and judging for themselves to the wisdom and care of holy mother church. But, did our venerable ancestors give way to such reasonings ? No, they did not, or, if they had, we, in all probability, had been sitting in the regions of antichristian darkness to this very day.

With such truths before us, and such an example in our view, let us proceed to establish those truths as terms of christian and church fellowship which are essentially requisite to constitute the christian character, and under the sweet and benign influence of their cheering rays, let us forbear one another in love, concerning all those topics on which we differ ; by doing so we shall at once reverence those truths, in the belief of which we are all agreed, take the most effectual method to attain unanimity on those concerning which we still differ, and, at the same time, cherish and advance that ardent Benevolence—Charity and Love—without which, the most flaming zeal, and the most accurate sentiments, are but as a sounding bras and a tinkling cymbal.

We have only to add, that though we have stated our sentiments on this important subject at some length, and with some degree of freedom, yet we have neither studiously brought forward all that we suppose capable of being urged in their favour, nor anxiously endeavoured to remove all that may be plausibly urged against them. Happy will we deem ourselves if either our success or disappointment shall ultimately contribute, in any respect, to excite, or enable others to extricate this interesting subject from that obscurity in which it hath so long, and so unhappily, been involved.

APPENDIX, No. IV.

ON COMPULSORY MEASURES IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

TO unite the due exercise of the rights of private judgment with those salutary restraints which the peace and happiness of society require, may be considered as the highest effort of legislative wisdom ; and it may be justly doubted, whether the precise boundaries between liberty and licentiousness, on the one hand, and between legal restraint and oppressive tyranny, on the other, have hitherto been successfully adjusted.

The truth is, that human passions are incessantly mingling themselves with all the discussions which relate to this subject. Hence we find, that those who are invested with authority and power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, are quick to discern, and eager to proclaim, the dangers resulting from unbounded liberty and unrestrained discussion ; while those in an inferior station, who happen to be actuated by a high spirit of civil and religious liberty, are apt to condemn, as tyrannical and unjust, even those beneficial restrictions which general utility rigorously demands.

We are never disposed to condemn the liberty of the press, or the fullest exercise of the rights of private judgment, so long as these are exercised in gratifying our humours, vindicating our rights, or humbling our opponents ; but no sooner are these privileges exercised in opposition to our favourite propensities, than we are generally inclined to commence tyrants in our turn, by decrying in others what we ourselves indulged with delight.

The truth of these remarks seems to be confirmed by the whole tenor of ecclesiastical and civil history ; but, perhaps, it is in religious discussions where the strength and prevalence of this disposition has been chiefly displayed. This may be partly accounted for, by considering the interesting nature of those objects which religion holds forth to our view, and the awful effects which misconception and error concerning them cannot fail to produce.

But whatever be the cause, no fact seems to be more fully attested, than that those very persons, who had not only claimed, but exercised the rights of private judgment in their utmost extent, have been the most forward in denying the enjoyment thereof to others ; they maintained the principle of innovation, until the specific doctrines and rites which they had recommended were adopted, and then joined in the general clamour against the folly of alteration, and the danger of change.

When the episcopal Protestant was contending against the

church of Rome, he openly avowed and strenuously defended freedom of enquiry, and the exercise of the rights of private judgment. But view him after his sentiments have obtained the sanction of the legislature, opposing and persecuting the puritan non-conformist, or the presbyterian dissenter; and you find, that having stept into the Pope's shoes, he has adopted his maxims, and imbibed his spirit, under the influence of which he wages the most malignant warfare against those sacred principles, which he lately was so eager to maintain.

Consider the Scotch Presbyterian, as manfully and successfully breaking the bonds of papal tyranny and prelatic superstition, and you find that freedom of thought, speech, and action, are recognised by him, as his most valuable and inalienable rights; but view him after he has obtained an exclusive establishment, addressing the civil power to enforce his system, with all civil pains, and immediately you discern him pulling up the rights of private judgment by the roots, and acting a part which indicates, that he wants nothing of infallibility but the name; for, if the Pope is infallible, he acts, as if he never erred, if the superior endowments of the former empower him to decide all religious controversies, the high attainments of the latter enable him not only to judge for himself, but for his fellow-citizens and posterity, and to tolerate none who either reject his dogmas, or disavow his opinions.

Contemplate the Reformed Presbytery, as bearing testimony against civil and ecclesiastical tyranny—consider them as maintaining, “that the noble faculty of conscience, is not subjected to the authority of man, &c.” and you behold the apparently warm friends, and firm supporters of our rights as men, and our privileges as Christians. But attend to them when enforcing the following propositions, as terms of communion, and you at once have an evidence of a great inconsistency (u), and an indication of the most profound ignorance of, or contempt for, liberty of conscience, and the rights of private judgment.

“ And further they affirm, that when magistrates are so constituted, Christians are bound, by the law of God, to support them in restraining, or otherwise punishing, as the case may require, all blasphemers, idolaters, false worshippers, heretics, &c *.”

(u) This is not the only inconsistency to be met with in their terms of communion. Every one who assents to the Auchenslaugh work, binds himself neither to pay tithes in support of the ecclesiastical, nor cefs or supply in support of the civil establishment of this country, nor to pursue or defend any action at law; but it is a fact that, in certain cases, the Testimony allows these duties to be paid; and we know of no imposition, to which they are liable, but what they submit to in common with others. And it is remarkable, that one of our most violent prosecutors had a plea depending before the court of session, at the very period he was endeavouring to thrust us out of their society, for hearing a missionary sermon. Compare p. 136, 138 of the Engagement to Duties, with p. 201 and 202 of the Testimony.

* See Testimony, p. 193.

So much shall serve as a specimen of the spirit of the Testimony ; let us now attend to the Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties at Auchensaugh, an adherence to which is made a term of christian communion ; the following are among the sins acknowledged :

“ The maintainers of *Quakerism*, *Bourignianism*, *Arminianism*, &c. are not punished, but protected by the state, &c.” Further, “ But these lands have again transgressed the Lord’s commandments, and broken this part of the covenant of the Lord by receiving—such—as maintain and defend, or tolerate and allow *prelacy* and *sectarian errors* in their dominions, contrary to the true religion and sound doctrine, contrary to justice and equity, yea, contrary to that trust specially committed to the hands of christian magistrates, who, for that end, have the sword given them ‘ that they may be a terror to evil doers,’ preserve and defend the true religion and professors thereof, and punish and extirpate false religions and heresies, and bring the wheel over the broachers, maintainers, and abettors thereof*.”

Having thus had a view of the Sins Confessed, let us now see what the Duties are, which were then engaged to :

“ We shall never consent, for any reason whatsoever, that the penal statutes made against Papists should be annulled ; but shall, when opportunity offers, be ready to concur in putting them to a due and vigorous execution †.”

One feels somewhat desirous to know what these penal statutes against Papists are, which every one in the communion of the Reformed Presbytery, every time he sits down at a communion table, engages to concur in putting to a vigorous execution, as soon as he hath an opportunity. Why, then, one of these statutes enacts, “ That whosoever shall say or hear mass, &c. shall, for the first offence, be liable to confiscation of goods, moveable and immovable, and be subjected to an arbitrary corporal punishment, at the discretion of the judge : for the second, shall be banished, and, for the third, shall suffer death ‡!”

Having thus consigned the deluded Papists to the hands of the executioner, let us now see what fate awaits such Protestants as have the misfortune to differ from the Reformed Presbytery in sentiment— “ Because we are not in a case to bring to a due trial and punishment condign, to the merit of their offences, malignants and evil instruments, according to the fourth article, therefore we shall endeavour to keep ourselves, as far as possible, from any compliance with, or approbation of their cause and courses.” But, who are these malignants that they virtually promise, over the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of the Prince of Peace, to bring to condign punishment, as soon as they have it in their power ? Why, according

* See Acknowledgment of Sins, p. 75 and 102. † See Engagement to Duties, p. 135. ‡ See Act of Parliament at Edinburgh, Dec. 15, 1567.

to the Testimony, every one seems to be a malignant, who opposes or denies the lawfulness of swearing the solemn league and covenant *.

With regard to the sentiments contained in these quotations, we have it to remark, that they are barbarous and detestable, when considered merely in themselves; but when established as terms of church fellowship, they are absolutely infernal! What! will you not only profess it lawful to put men to death, while you deem them such heretics as must render their exit the prelude to eternal misery? But will you allow none to sit down at the feast of love, at the banquet of peace, but such as have sworn to aid you in such diabolical services? Tell us no more of the impiety of sacramental tests! Talk no more of the barbarity of a Spanish inquisition! By means of the former, the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper is indeed prostituted to the ends of temporal emolument and political expediency, but you render it subservient to the purposes of cruelty and murder; and what can a court of inquisition do beyond putting those to death, who, in *their judgment*, are the enemies of God and truth?

Rev. Sirs, you either believe, that the doctrines contained in these quotations are true, or you do not; if you do, what a mercy is it to others, and what a favour to yourselves, that you are unable to reduce them to practice. But if you do not believe them, and yet are continuing, not only to profess them as a body yourselves, but to enforce them on others as a term of church fellowship, the English language furnishes no words sufficient to express the enormity of your conduct.

The truth is, that if we were to ascertain your character and dispositions through the medium of these principles only, we should be obliged to rank you among the greatest pests of human society; and yet, whoever would draw this conclusion concerning you would greatly err, for some amiable and many respectable virtues you most assuredly possess.

How then is this to be accounted for? We sincerely, and we think impartially, give it as our judgment, that the far greater part of your people (and perhaps some of yourselves) are still acting the part we once, to our shame and grief, acted along with them; they are not attending properly to the ground they stand on, nor to the path they are treading: Nay, they are not fully acquainted with the plain, the direct, the inevitable consequences of their own professed principles, while those, whose eyes begin to open, and, at the same time, for one reason or another, wish to continue in your connexion, are obliged, when acceding to your terms of communion, to act like children taking pills; they shut their eyes and swallow them whole, knowing, that if they begin to chew them, they would immediately nauseate and throw them off. Would it

* See Testimony, p. 93.

not be preferable, in every respect, to purge your terms of those doctrines which the greater part, if not the whole of your number, would not, for a world, be instrumental in putting in practice? It surely would be wise in you not to allow, for a single moment, sentiments which lead to such unavailing barbarity, to stain your other virtues, and disgrace the pages of your Creed. If you suppose that those, who begin to think, and judge, and act for themselves, are thereby giving indications that they are about to abandon your society, study, at least, to put it out of their power to say, what we can affirm, that we had either to reject your decision, and decline your authority, or abandon some of the most important principles of christianity; and whether it be better to hearken unto you, or unto God, judge ye.

Such of your number as really believe the doctrine contained in this part of your system will be apt to tell us, that the Old Testament Scriptures are inimical to toleration, and actually enjoin, that blasphemers, idolaters, &c. should be put to death (x).

It is indeed true, that the children of Israel were commissioned to put blasphemers and idolaters to death, and when once you are placed in the same, or in similar circumstances, or receive a commission, equally well attested, to the same effect, we will have little hope of successfully disputing your right to reduce your principles to practice.

The Jewish nation were under a theocracy, in which Jehovah himself condescended to be their King as well as their God; he, therefore, as such, appointed his own vice-gerents, gave them their whole system of political institutions, and, in all embarrassing circumstances, allowed them free access to himself for a determination by the Urim and Thummim, &c. In consequence of this arrangement, idolatry was high treason against the state; and it is to be remarked, that the injunction to put idolaters to death was only given at a certain period of their history, and had for its object the Canaanites, and such of their own people as were chargeable with idolatry; but if they had put any person to death for this crime, who was not of the fore-mentioned descriptions, or if they had acted upon this principle prior to its having been enjoined by Jehovah, they, in either case, would have been guilty of murder. Hence, we find, that when the supreme Law-

(x) We do not like the term toleration, and would really wish that the use thereof were wholly laid aside; what we contend for is, that every man has, in so far as any other man is concerned, an absolute and inalienable right to judge for himself in religious matters, for the exercise of which right he is accountable to no power on earth, but to God only.

With regard to blasphemers, we think that Dr. Campbell has evinced, in the most satisfactory manner, that mere error in the understanding is never termed blasphemy in Scripture; if so, what we usually denominate heresy will not constitute that crime, as it cannot exist but where there is malice knowingly and avowedly manifested in opposition to the dictates of the judgment, against the greatest, the wisest, and the best of Beings.—See the Ninth Dissertation, prefixed to his Version of the Four Gospels.

giver saw it meet to authorise the destruction of the Amalekites and the Midianites, a particular injunction was issued to that purpose.

Upon the whole, we see much reason to believe, that God hath instituted the office of civil magistracy, in order to protect and advance all our interests as members of civil society, and, therefore, the civil magistrate has no cognizance of any fault or crime *merely as committed against God*; considered in this light, he must leave the punishment thereof to Him who hath said—‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay it.’

In connexion with this, we are disposed to think, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his church, hath appointed a government therein, the objects, and laws, and censures of which, are wholly spiritual; and, therefore, the only *formal* reason why any fault or crime is cognizable by them, is, because it is *sinful in the sight of God*.

Let us now attend to the practical use of this doctrine: A man, a member of the church, is left to fall into some grievous enormity; for example, he commits the dreadful sin of murder. Now, we have supposed that he is amenable to two different courts for this crime; as it is against *society*, it is cognizable, and to be punished by the *civil magistrate*; as it is against *God*, the *church* is the only competent power on earth to take any judicial notice thereof. But it is material to remark, that the process is carried on by these distinct authorities for different ends, on different principles, and by separate rules. The magistrate proposes to repair the injuries which society hath sustained, and to prevent it from sustaining the like in future. The church deals only with the *conscience*, and endeavours to reclaim a fallen brother, and to induce him to glorify God, by making an open confession of his guilt. The former leads his evidence, and gives his sentence, according to the forms established by the state; the latter proceeds on the principles and rules of the sacred Scriptures; the magistrate finds his guilt proven, and appoints him to execution; the church finds the same, and declares him no longer worthy of a name and place in the house of God.

TO E. 58

In one word, he confesses and bewails his guilt in the ears and at the feet of the magistrate, notwithstanding which the interests of society require his execution. But he gives evidence to the church of his deep contrition, and sincere repentance in the sight of God for his crime, on which she receives him to her communion, and dispenses to him her privileges, and, perhaps, the very next day, the last sentence of the civil law is executed on him.

From these sentiments it evidently follows, that every civil ruler ought to say, *my kingdom* is only of this world, and we know for certain, that the institutor of all church authority hath declared, that *HIS KINGDOM* ‘is not from hence.’

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